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An Unfinished Divorce

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Her Better Self

BY

FRANCIS D. GALLATIN

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New York
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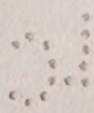

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To my Brother,

ALBERT R. GALLATIN,

this book is affectionately dedicated.

"The American nation is developing itself, or transforming itself, so rapidly that its citizens are in a position, from their own personal experience, to appreciate more readily than can be done in Europe, the immense rôle which is played in life by hidden forces."

Gugliemo Ferrero.

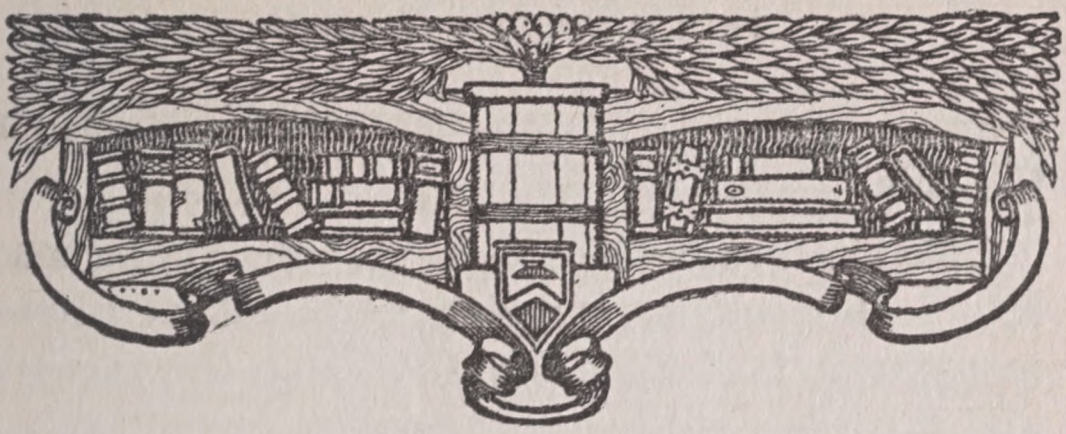
FOREWORD

THE increase of divorce, particularly among the upper classes all over the world, is agitating the churches and the moralists to an extent which has not been noted before in our time and generation. Unfortunately the whole question is being discussed in a sentimental, disconnected and irrational fashion, due largely to certain preconceived notions as to the so-called sanctity of the marriage institution, and the assumption that it is the result of a divine command. Necessity as the basis of moral law, has been completely ignored, and the refusal to acknowledge the fact that centuries of experience with the monogamous marriage have failed to eradicate, not to say, modify in the slightest degree, the naturally polygamous instincts of the average man.

It will be admitted that a discussion or argument gains nothing through the suppression of facts, much as we may dislike to acknowledge them. But it is only by bravely confronting the situation as we find it, and by viewing it from all standpoints that we arrive at conclusions that will bear the test of experience and advance the state of society.

In this book the author discusses the subject of divorce from the various points of view as above outlined in a masterly fashion. The characters drawn from all classes of life are so opposed and chosen, that the mind of the reader sees through the mere machinery of the exposition and appreciates the fact that the subject is being treated in an entirely novel and heretofore, unattempted manner. The reader will perceive, as the title leads us to infer, that in the end the fundamental thesis is proved: namely, that the institution of monogamous marriage, as it exists to-day, is on the whole the best solution of the sex question that the human race has so far evolved; in spite of the fact that it is at variance with some of the most fundamental instincts of mankind.

—Albert R. Gallatin.



I

THE Paris express had left Bellegarde, and, gathering speed, was rushing through the storm towards Geneva, where it was due to arrive in about three-quarters of an hour. Seated close to the window of a first-class compartment, Jean des Ormes eagerly scanned the familiar scenes as they flitted by; but night was falling rapidly and, in the deepening obscurity, the landscape soon became indistinct. Through the pouring rain, the red and green signal lights gleamed mistily, and now and then the brightly illuminated window of a small way-station would ap-

pear, only to be immediately swallowed up in the thick darkness.

"We shall soon be at Geneva," the young man said to himself, as, tugging at his short brown moustache, he turned his eyes from the window and restlessly shifted his position.

After an absence of over a year, spent in the wilds of Eastern Africa, Jean des Ormes was returning home. His good humored but rather irresolute countenance was deeply bronzed by the tropical sun, and his tall well-knit figure was thin and lank from the hard work and exposure incident to the adventurous life he had been leading.

In certain lights gray hairs could be detected on his temples, which, together with the deep lines about his eyes and mouth, gave him an appearance of greater age than his thirty-three years would warrant. Wealthy and of excellent birth, his education had been that of others of his class, and had failed to endow him with that fixity of purpose which is indispensable to any real success in life. Married while still a youth, he had discovered after twelve months of perfect happiness, that the yoke of matrimony was galling him. Not that he had grown indifferent to his wife—she had been, and still con-

tinued to be his ideal—and no other woman had ever appealed to him as she had done, but his early marriage had prevented him from fully satisfying his curiosity.

A great traveler he himself did not fully realize the fact that his frequent absences were due quite as much to his desire to learn what he should have learned before contracting permanent ties, as to any other cause. His interests and affections, nevertheless were centered about his home and had his marriage been postponed until his character had been formed by contact with the world, everything indicated that he would have made a devoted husband. Never during his voyages were wife and children long distant from his thoughts, nor did his desire to be reunited with them diminish as time went by. He was one of those unfortunate individuals on whom a restless nature, abundant means and the modern facilities for travel had bestowed the instincts of a nomad.

"Berthe will be surprised at my return," he soliloquized. "She has no idea, that I am in Europe, but thinks me still in Darkest Africa. I wonder how my sudden arrival will affect her. Maurice has sometimes jokingly asserted that my habit of appearing on the scene without the

usual warning rather implies a lack of confidence in my wife; but God knows that my only motive is to spare her weeks of anxiety while I am at sea. However, since we had quarreled about Estelle Rondin, and considering our rather strained relations when we separated, it would perhaps have been wiser had I telegraphed her from Paris."

He lit a cigarette and, after a moment's hesitation, arose and reached for his valise, which had been placed in the rack above his head. He unlocked it and drew forth a dozen or more letters whose worn appearance evidenced their frequent and thoughtful reading. He turned, so that the gas lamp in the ceiling would illuminate them to the best advantage, and once more devoted himself to their perusal. Notwithstanding the fact that he knew them by heart he could not avoid showing his annoyance at their contents.

"This is not quite fair of Berthe," he muttered to himself, "but perhaps I ought not to blame her for thinking as she did."

"However, this is too much," he exclaimed a moment later. "I really do not think that she ought to accuse me of such an act—anything but that—give the devil his due."

As he read, his countenance gradually cleared; the letters apparently becoming more satisfactory.

"Thank God she has gotten over her foolishness," he ejaculated, as he folded the last and replaced it in its envelope.

After he had restored the package to its former place and carefully relocked the valise he endeavored through the darkness to determine his exact position. "Here we are already at La Plaine and home once more," he exclaimed, as the Swiss arms over the door of the custom house flashed by. "I must begin to make my preparations."

When he had finished rolling his shawl strap and collecting his gun cases and valises, the murky sky was already aglow with the distant reflection of the city's lights.

"Back again," he cried joyfully as panting the great locomotive came to rest in the glass covered hall of the station. Having complied with the necessary formalities he passed out on to the platform of the Custom House. His porter hailed a cab, on the roof of which he piled the heavy trunks. When all was ready, his address was given to the coachman, the door was

slammed to, the driver cracked his whip and away he rumbled towards his home.

The rain was now falling steadily, a hard autumn downpour which splashed against the windows. With that keen sense of delight which is excited by the renewal of one's acquaintance with familiar scenes he noted the shining of the street lamps on the wet wooden pavement, from which arose a damp tarry smell redolent of pleasant memories. On the sidewalks of the broad avenue the passers-by were struggling with their umbrellas.

A few moments' drive brought him to the *quai* near the great hotels ablaze with light. On his left the brightly illuminated terrace of the casino was reflected in the dark waters of the lake and on his right shone the broad windows of the power station. Then, all this was behind him as the horse's hoofs pounded on the hard asphalt of the bridge of the Mont Blanc. The opposite side of the lake which could now be plainly seen was outlined by misty electric lamps gleaming through the rain; behind these like fireflies flitted the lights of the moving trams. At the pier a great lake steamboat was discharging its cosmopolitan passengers, who cursing or laughing according to their nationality, were hasten-

ing to seek refuge from the drenching rain. Across the harbor glided the ferry launch with the half-muffled sound of its gasoline engine.

The bridge crossed, the carriage entered a long narrow street. In the darkness of gloomy passages shone the red lights that hung before the temples of the priestesses of civilization—the shrines frequented by the worshippers of Venus. From upper windows descended the muffled sounds of pianos accompanying lewd songs, the words of which could not be distinguished from below. He knew that they were lewd, for often he had sat half dazed by smoke and alcohol in those stuffy rooms over the bars, listening to cadaverous tenors pouring forth their crude obscenity.

At the corner of a gloomy alley his eyes fell on a harlot of the lowest grade, a street walker searching for her prey, her skirts soaking wet to the knees, her poor feathers and cheap finery all bedraggled and forlorn. The rain had streaked her painted, powdered, ghoul-like face with the dye from her hair.

Turning to the left he was driven up the Corraterie across the Place Neuve, past the Theatre and thus into the residential quarter of the town. A few squares further and the carriage drew up

before the handsome apartment house of which he occupied the *rez-de-chausée.* He jumped to the sidewalk, and, running up the short flight of steps, rang the bell and impatiently waited to be admitted.

From the vestibule where he stood he could hear the sound of his wife's voice as she sang at her piano in the library. "Come my friend I'll be so good so sweet to thee" rang out in her clear soprano notes that beautiful song from "Sappho."

"A good augury," he thought. "It is undoubtedly of me that she is thinking." A moment later the door opened, but to his surprise, it was a new butler that admitted him. "Why, where is Alfred?" he asked, "I hope he is not ill."

"Oh no, sir, Madame has discharged him," replied the man in a respectful voice, in which, however, could be detected a note of surprised resentment. "Do you wish to see Madame—whom may I have the honor of announcing?"

"You need not worry about that," he replied, "I am Monsieur des Ormes himself. By the way, how long ago did Alfred leave?" It was decidedly an uncomfortable feeling that Jean experienced at finding himself thus treated as a stranger at his own door. "He left about three

months ago, sir," said the man in answer to his last question. "Well, help the coachman with my things," he ordered as he stopped to pat a fox terrier who, at the sound of his voice, had bounded into the hall, barking with delight and jumping up to lick his face.

"Hello, Jack," he said, "you at any rate recognize me."

The singing suddenly stopped.

"What is it Paul, who is there?" called Madame des Ormes to the butler, "What makes Jack so excited?"

Before the man could reply Jean with rapid steps had gained the library. "It is I, Berthe!" he cried with outstretched arms. She sprang to her feet, upsetting the stool in her surprised haste, and confronted him pale and trembling.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded when she had regained her self-possession sufficiently to speak.

He stopped short, his enthusiasm killed by her words. His arms fell to his side.

"What am I doing here, Berthe? Why really I do not understand your question."

"Did you not get my last letter?" she asked, as freeing her skirts from the fallen stool she walked

to her arm chair on the other side of the room and sank limply into its deep cushions.

"I received several letters, which do you mean by your last one?" he replied, recovering in a measure from the astonishment her conduct had occasioned.

"Why the one I wrote you, asking you not to come back." Scarcely had the words passed her lips when their needless cruelty became apparent to her, and she hastened to add: "That is, if you did not want to."

"Of course I wanted to, whatever could have put the idea into your head that I did not? But come, you are only making fun of me, you never wrote any such letter," and he bent to kiss her. She raised her face to his, but turned away again so quickly that his lips barely touched her cold white cheek. The gesture was so indicative of indifference and so plainly showed the altered state of her feelings towards him that Jean was overwhelmed with dismay.

"My God," he exclaimed as stepping backward he fell into a chair. "Tell me," he continued gently, "tell me about that letter and what made you write it."

"It is very simple," and her voice was hard and unforgiving, "I wrote you a few weeks ago in-

forming you that as far as I was concerned you could prolong indefinitely your stay in Africa. That I considered your disgraceful conduct had rendered impossible any future relations between us and had made it necessary for me to break definitely with you if I wished to preserve even a thread of self-respect."

He shook his head hopelessly. "Berthe, you are too hard on me. I would not have believed that you could be so cruel. It is all my fault, I know, but the idea that you, my wife, could even for a moment have entertained the thought of separating me permanently from my children and yourself is beyond belief."

She could not altogether overcome a feeling of compassion, so evident were his sorrow and despair, and it was in a softer tone that she said: "Come, Jean, do not be so cast down; it is hard on you and I pity you, but remember how you have tried me and how often I have forgiven."

"I know it, Berthe, you have always been very good to me, very patient with me, but this only makes the blow the harder to bear. The last letters I received from you were so kind and loving." The memory of her wrongs was revived by this reminder of the affection that she had, as she

now thought, vainly lavished on her husband.

"Were they?" she said, and there was a sneer concealed in her voice. "It is a pity you did not receive my last, it must have crossed you—and have you forgotten my earlier ones?"

"I know nothing of the last except what you tell me and as for the others I forgive you those. You had your provocation and I am forced to admit that they contained a certain amount of truth. I must add, however, that there was much in them that was unkind and false. You know Berthe that you should not believe everything you hear."

"Why do you not call me a liar at once and have done with it?" she cried, trying to make herself believe that he had purposely insulted her. She hoped thus to quicken the anger, which was rapidly subsiding under the influence of his distress.

"You know perfectly well, Berthe," he replied, and the sorrow in his voice caused her eyes to fill with tears, outraged even as she felt herself to have been, "that I do not deliberately accuse you of telling an untruth, but only of having been mistaken and of having been too harsh in your judgment. Do not misconstrue my

words. I have done enough against you, it is not necessary for you to discover imaginary wrongs" and he smiled sadly. "But tell me, dear," he continued, "there is something that I cannot understand. Your earlier letters were as you admit bitter and as I have said perhaps unjust, but later their tone completely changed and they became affectionate and almost tender, such letters in fact that one would expect from a dutiful wife to her absent husband. And now, Berthe, "he held his hands towards her as he spoke "after a year's absence you will scarcely kiss me. Tell me what I have done that you should thus suddenly change once more."

"I did not suddenly change," and she raised her voice angrily. "This has been coming on for years. It was you, yourself, that drove me to it." As her fixed intention of resisting to the utmost any softening influence became apparent, a feeling of despair invaded him.

"But excuse me, dear, the change *has* been sudden. You may not realize it, but such is the fact. In one of your more recent letters you enclosed a pretty photograph of yourself and Jack. Do you not remember writing that you had received my letter asking your forgiveness and that you freely granted it and begged

me to return? Can you not recall saying that you knew our ties were too sacred to be broken; and that, if only for the children's sake you would have pardoned me? Do you not remember writing this, tell me, Berthe?"

"I do not care what I wrote. I did not change suddenly,—I did not. Think of what your conduct has been for years past. You have done your utmost to destroy all the finer feelings of my nature. The devotion I gave you without grudging was like a great fire. You had become so used to its heat that you began to think that its warmth would never fail you. But you have trampled on it until at last it is extinguished. It is dead, quite dead, and no matter what you do, you can never kindle that flame again. Amid the cold ashes there lies not concealed the faintest spark."

"Not the faintest spark, Berthe, not the faintest?"

"No, Jean the fire is dead, and by your fault, by yours only." Great tears welled in her eyes and overflowing coursed down her cheeks. She wept for her dead happiness as she had mourned the child she lost. At first the tears fell slowly, presaging the storm to follow.

Then faster and faster they came and her form was convulsed with sobs. He should have let her weep. But when did a man ever understand a woman's heart? If her affection had been dead would she have thus wept its death? No, he must needs interfere.

"Come, Berthe," he cried in deep distress, "do not let your feelings overpower you. It can do no good and what you tell me explains nothing. If your affection was dead why did you forgive me and after forgiving me why do you speak to me as you do? There is something you are concealing."

At the sound of his voice she made an effort to collect herself. "Now you are making insinuations," she sobbed. "You are insulting me. I will not stay here to be insulted." Before he could prevent her she had fled to her room and closed the door. He heard the key turn in the lock.

"Something serious has happened," he said to himself as he arose and wandered restlessly about the room. "During the whole eleven years of our married life she never acted this way before, although I must admit that there have been circumstances under which such conduct would have been comprehensible."

He had had much experience, but he had not yet thoroughly learned his lesson. Does anyone ever thoroughly learn it?—that woman is fickle. Even had he believed this of all others, he had placed his wife in a class by herself and had admired, trusted and respected her, so now he attempted to explain her conduct in every way except the right one. He tried to find comfort in the thought that she had been vexed by his prolonged absence and overcome by the unexpectedness of his return. He hoped that in a few moments she would draw aside the portière and that he would hear her say in a low coaxing tone: "May I come in and show my naughty boy that I love him?" and that he would feel her arms around him and hear her whisper, "Does my old lover love his woman?" So he sat down and waited.

He would not believe her when she insisted that her affection for him was dead. Perhaps his appreciation of her conduct was more influenced than he would have readily admitted by that vanity which is natural to all males. Mr. Peacock would not only consider himself a much injured fowl, but would also be genuinely surprised were Mrs. Peacock to look with eyes of favor on any tail feathers but his own, let

them be as bedraggled and broken as you will. He was sure that she still cared for him; anything else was unthinkable. To him this was beyond dispute, since man-like he readily believed that which accorded with his self-esteem. At length, tired of sitting still, he arose and gazed at a full length portrait of his wife which was hanging on the wall.

Painted by Georgiano some two years after their marriage, when their eldest child was a baby a few months old, it was considered by the artist one of his finest works. The charm of the pose, the soft transparency of the brilliant coloring, the wealth of detail in the rich draping of the gown, the contrasts of light and shade, and the harmony existing between the figure and the background, combined to make of it a masterpiece.

As he studied the painting his attention was especially attracted to the hands which were very beautiful. He had always admired them, but this afternoon there was something changed in the appearance of those long slim fingers which he thought he knew so well, something about their texture and form unfamiliar to him. In the way she held her half-open fan he detected a something Spanish and coquettish which he

had never before observed. From the hands his eyes followed the full downward sweep of the green brocade skirt until they rested on the little foot in its embroidered slipper, which seemed to be tapping the floor with a scarcely restrained impatience. Then he raised his head and looked the picture directly in the face. The living blonde hair formed a halo of light and joy around the oval countenance, with its clear pink and white tints, smiling down on him, from above the exquisitely moulded neck and arms. The artist had painted the eyes green, so they must have looked that way to him. As for Jean he had never been quite sure whether they were green or blue. His gaze dwelling on the perfect curve of the mouth seemed to detect a mocking expression in the smile which slightly parted the full red lips. There was a barely concealed hardness about the face and although the look was frank and the chin rather weak it suddenly dawned on him that with all her apparent truthfulness and sweetness she could be unforgiving and deceitful. He could not have explained how he read this in the pictured features of his wife nor why he saw it now for the first time. The artist, who had known her at the most a few months, had worked into his

masterly production characteristics which years of closest communion had failed to reveal to the husband. It has been well said that one can never really know a face until he has attempted to sketch it.

"This is curious" he said to himself, "and now that I come to think of it Georgiano never really liked Berthe. He admired her, to be sure, and was delighted at the opportunity I gave him of painting her, but he always seemed uncomfortable and ill at ease when she was near. This is the more peculiar since she was so much taken by him and exerted all her fascination to gain his friendship. His coldness was always a mystery to me. Most people at once fall victims to her charms—she is so beautiful and amusing and such excellent company.

"But I wonder where Berthe unearthed this," he said to himself as a statue of Krishna reposing in a niche to the right of the portrait attracted his attention. "It is certainly a very handsome piece of workmanship," he added as he studied the object more attentively. "Probably a gift from some admirer," and he resumed his restless pacing. "People always spoiled her."

He walked to the mantel where stood the pict-

ures of his children, and looked long and earnestly at them. "Dear little Jeannette," he said as he raised to his lips the colored photograph of a baby six months old. "Perhaps after all it is just as well you died," and he looked at the curly golden locks and the wide open blue eyes. "You were spared much suffering. Pray for your mother and for me, dear baby child. Your sweet prayers must surely move Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." The tears veiled his sight as he replaced the picture. "Come now this is foolishness, get yourself together." He lit a cigarette and rang the bell.

"Did you ring, sir?" asked the butler when he appeared.

"How long ago did Alfred leave?"

"About three months ago, sir."

"You have been here ever since?"

"Yes, sir, I entered Madame's service the next day."

"What recommendations did you have?"

"It was Monsieur Arthur Bornier, who was kind enough to personally recommend me to Madame," replied the man, who was becoming

uncomfortable under this series of curt questions.

"Very good. Do you know what wine there is in the cellar?"

"There is not very much. Madame was saying only yesterday that she would order some more."

"Is there any champagne?"

"No sir, there is none at all. Madame has been entertaining a great deal."

"Then give us for dinner a bottle of whatever you have. You may go."

"So Berthe has been entertaining a great deal." He felt troubled about it, although he could not say why. He poured himself a drink of brandy. As he set down the glass he heard the pattering of tiny feet and the glad cries of his children.

"Dear father," sobbed Marthe, the elder of the two, a pretty girl of ten, as she threw herself into his arms. "I am so glad that you have come back."

Meanwhile the baby boy Aimé was wildly grasping him around the legs and crying, "Look, papa, look at this, see what Uncle Arthur gave me." The child stopped his demonstra-

tions long enough to point to a train of cars he had been dragging after him.

"Very nice, my dear," said his father, bending down to kiss the upturned face. "They are very pretty indeed, but who the deuce is Uncle Arthur?"

"Why surely father you must know," Marthe explained for her brother, "it is Monsieur Bornier, of course."

"Bornier," he cried in surprise. "Does Monsieur Arthur Bornier come here?"

"Why nearly every day," answered Marthe. "Look what he gave me." She held up her slender wrist, around which he perceived a thin gold bracelet.

"Bornier again," thought Jean to himself.

"And how have you been Marthe since I have been away?"

"Oh, father, I have been very well, but we have both missed you so much, have we not baby? Is he not a beautiful child?" she asked with sisterly pride, as she again hugged her father, who had seated himself and taken his boy on his knee.

"And what has papa's baby been doing?" he asked as he lovingly stroked his curly locks.

"What did papa bring back for Aimé?" asked the child.

"Oh lots and lots of nice things. A stuffed baby crocodile."

"Croc'dile for baby. Baby shoot croc'dile" and he made the gesture of raising a gun to his shoulder.

"And Marthe I have a riding whip of hippopotamus hide for you. I brought other things as well, but I am sure that you will like this the best. We used to take such nice rides together."

"I am much obliged to you father. Is not that lovely? Since you have been away I have taken many splendid long rides with Uncle Arthur. We had such fun the other day." Her cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled at the recollection. "We were riding through a field when a constable tried to stop us, but we were going too fast for him. Uncle Arthur is so jolly, you ought to have heard him make jokes at the man," and she laughed merrily at the thought.

"Has your mother ridden much this last year?" As Aimé was growing restless he put him on the floor where he commenced to play at hunting crocodiles."

"A great deal," replied Marthe. "Mother and

I and Uncle Arthur go out two or three times a week."

"Run along now children, take your brother back to nurse, it is getting near dinner time and I must dress." He kissed the children and they left the room. "Bornier," he said to himself, "so that man comes here."

II.

THAT evening when Jean and Berthe entered the dining room the former's attention was attracted by the immense mass of pink roses with which the table was decorated. "What pretty flowers those are," he remarked, "Did you send out and get them in honor of my return? If you did I appreciate it very much."

"No," she replied shortly, and she looked if possible more cold and reserved than before. "They were a present."

Not wishing to annoy her he questioned her no further, but devoted his attention to the soup. "I am glad to see that you have not changed the cook. No one but Celestine can make such a *purée à la reine* as this. By the way, now I think of it, I had quite forgotten to ask you what Alfred did that made it necessary to discharge him." She frowned at her husband and glanced towards the butler who was arranging the service on the side table, his back turned towards them.

"I understand," said Jean, "What are you taking?" he continued, as his wife stirred a powder into the wineglass of water standing by her plate.

"It is veranol. I am forced to use it, otherwise I do not sleep," she explained, and the glance she threw at him as she spoke signified "and it is all your fault."

"Be careful or the next thing you know you will be getting into the drug habit."

"It is better that I should get into the drug habit than into the habit of not sleeping."

The last course had been removed. "Berthe," he asked, "Shall we have coffee here?"

"I never take any myself, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether you take it here or in the library," she replied.

"Serve the coffee and bring the liqueurs and cigars," he ordered the butler. "You do not mind my smoking?"

"Why do you ask me, you always have smoked when I was in the room?"

"You have changed in so many ways that I thought you might object, but since you do not I will take advantage of your permission." He lit his cigar. "Tell me," he continued when the

man had left the room and they were alone, "what did Alfred do?"

"You seem to interest yourself a great deal in a servant. When you leave me alone for a year or so it seems as if I might have the right to direct my own household." Her voice was low with contained rage.

"I do not question your right," he replied soothingly, "but Alfred had been with us so many years—ever since we were married, in fact, and appeared so attached to me that I am interested in knowing in what way he offended you."

"He was extremely impertinent and I will not stand impertinence from anyone—you understand me, I say from anyone—not even if he was very much attached to *you.*" She raised her voice, as overcome by her anger she lost her self-control.

"Calm yourself Berthe, do not get so excited. No one wants you to put up with impertinence, but what did he say?"

"You have absolutely not the slightest right to question me in this way, but if you must know, he talked too much to the other servants."

"About you? I understand, let us drop the subject—it is as you say—of no importance,"

he added, as she flushed and was about to protest. "Now let us talk about yourself—will you kindly tell me what in Heaven's name is the matter with you?"

"The matter with me, there is nothing the matter with me, I never felt better in my life," she replied, purposely misinterpreting him.

"Please be serious, you know perfectly well that it was not your health that I referred to."

"Of course it was not, please forgive me my mistake. I quite forgot that that subject would not interest you," she answered sarcastically.

"Berthe, please do not talk that way, you must be aware that you are misconstruing me; I am quite easy on the score of your health, I never saw you look better or handsomer in your life."

But she would not be softened. "Ah you are beginning to pay me compliments, are you? I suppose that having just returned from a long voyage you realize that after all I may be a rather desirable woman. You begin too late; the time for such things is past—they no longer affect me."

"Dearest, you know that there never was a time when I was not glad to get back to you and

that I have always been your greatest admirer."

"That is very nice and kind of you I am sure, but I have no desire of being only a person to whom it is pleasant to get back."

"What I said I meant as a compliment and you know that perfectly well." He could not refrain from smiling at her perverseness. There shone an answering gleam in her eye, but it lasted but an instant. If anything could have saved the situation it should have been their sense of humor, but even this was now powerless. It was in a relentless voice that she continued: "From your point of view I suppose that it was a compliment, for I am aware that you men look on your wives as havens of refuge, as ports to put into in case of storm. You like to feel yourselves free to search elsewhere and yet to know that in case of failure there is something steady at home. I know you well you see, but believe me I have no intention of serving as a reliable old horse. It amuses you to break in new beasts for your service, but you wish to keep in the stable one who never goes lame, who never balks, who is used to your ways and is always ready to serve you."

"Now Berthe, calm yourself and tell me why you think that I look on you in the light of an

old horse." His gentleness only exasperated her the more.

"Do not be afraid I shall tell you. To begin with can you deny that you have been unfaithful to me and that now you have come back seeking forgiveness? Oh, no, I have had as much of your conduct as I can stand. You have insulted me by taking my friends as mistresses, you have neglected me. Everyone is talking about the way you leave me to go wandering for months and years in distant countries. I should like to know whoever has been treated like an old horse if I have not?" She paused for want of breath.

"But, Berthe, admitting all this to be true, you have forgiven me and I have returned relying on that forgiveness. Do not be so hard," he besought her.

"I am not hard. But if I did forgive you I take it back. I do not forgive you any more."

"But I will not allow you to go back on your word. You can have discovered nothing new about me since you forgave, and to prove that you really did forgive I will quote to you from one of your letters, I know it by heart. 'Dearest,' you wrote, 'I received you loving letter and am glad to learn that you still care for me. I

dreamed of you last night, that you were lying by my side. For the first time in, I do not know how long, I felt that you were where you belonged, I felt at home with you. Come back to me. I am a handsome woman and you are wrong to leave me for so long. As you say our ties are too sacred to be easily broken—and then there are the children, we must think of them. You acknowledge that you have wronged me and you are sorry; so I forgive you. Let us begin over again and I am sure that we can make each other happy. We were married when we were so young and we have both been foolish. We all miss you, come back to your wife and children.' That is what your letter said."

"If *I* wrote that I was a fool. I suppose that I was lonely at the time. But it is useless discussing the matter any further. My mind is quite made up and cannot be changed. You seemed to have forgotten that even if I am your wife I am still a woman."

"Berthe, you are not telling me the whole truth. You cannot make me believe that there has not been some sudden alteration in your feelings toward me. There must be some reason for this strange repulsion with which I seem to inspire you. Some new influence has entered

into your life, and it prevents your forgiving me."

"You are crazy, Jean, I should think that your behaviour was sufficient explanation."

Jean puffed at his cigar. "Those were handsome presents that Bornier gave the children," he remarked irrelevantly after a moment's silence and having knocked the ashes into the saucer of his coffee cup he looked reflectively at the glowing tobacco.

Berthe flushed with anger. "Monsieur Bornier is a friend of mine," she said in icy tones "and I do not intend discussing my friends with you."

"Excuse me, my dear, but I was not discussing him; I merely remarked on the exquisite taste that he displayed in the selection of the presents for the children. I consider my allusion rather flattering than otherwise. In fact to be frank with you I cannot remember ever having heard anything half so flattering said of him before," was the sarcastic rejoinder.

"I understand your insinuations and I am not surprised that you make them, for it was to be expected that one of your mean nature would add insult to injury," she replied fiercely, "and

if you do not change your tone I shall leave the room."

"Berthe, I did not mean to offend you." He arose and laying down his cigar walked over to where she sat, and took her hand. She allowed it to remain in his, but it was cold and limp. "Berthe, my wife," he said imploringly, "forgive me."

"Forgiveness is what you men always ask," she answered listlessly, "yet under these circumstances you yourselves are adamant. What would your answer be if it were I that was asking for forgiveness?" He dropped her hand and resumed his place opposite her.

"Berthe, how can you, a pure woman, even mention such things!" he replied in a shocked voice. "Cannot you understand that the faults are not the same; that you are attempting to establish an equality between two acts that cannot even be compared."

She placed her elbows on the table and resting her chin on her closed fists she looked him in the eyes? "And why not?" she asked. "Did not Jesus Christ forgive the woman taken in adultery? By what right do you lay down a different law from His?"

"Our Lord's connection with the event was

that of an outsider. The woman to whom you refer was not His wife. Under similar circumstances we all are willing to condone."

"Do not be profane." She smiled in spite of her indignation which had been excited at what she considered his inconsistency. "But," she resumed, "it is not fair that a man should be free to do that which would be ruin for a woman. You may say what you will, but it is horribly unjust."

"Berthe, we cannot enter into a philosophical discussion, but surely the physiological reason for the discrimination in our favor is evident. The consequences of a woman's sin, the blow which it deals to the integrity of the family are incomparably more terrible, the doubt which it throws on the paternity of the children destroys the very basis of our society. Then again, a woman, unless she is a monster, loves the man to whom she gives herself."

"What beasts you men are anyway," replied Berthe in tones of disgust. "You cannot make me believe that it is fair, that there should be two rules of conduct one for men and one for women. We should have the same liberty of action which you have arrogated to yourselves."

"There now, the cat is out of the bag and the

perversity of the female heart is laid bare. What you are asking is not that all men should become as virtuous as are most women, but that women should be free to be as immoral as are all men. To be fair, however, I must admit that you are on the right road, if you are seeking equality, for as there could be but one equality of intelligence—the equality of universal idiocy—as there could be but one of wealth—that of universal poverty—but one of culture—that of absolute barbarism: so there could be but one equality of morals between men and women—that of promiscuous license. You can level down, but you cannot level up. Women are on the mountain tops, we are in the valleys. It is impossible for us to attain your heights, but unfortunately it is only too easy for you to slide down to our depths."

She was still looking at him through her half-closed eyes. "That is very pretty and very complimentary, but (and I believe that I remarked it before) men are selfish beasts. It is not our fault if nature has decreed that we should bear the children, but you take advantage of the fact that you are more fortunate to excuse your perjury and your ruthless wounding of us in our most sacred feelings."

"Well, dear, say what you will we can never agree on this subject, so now let us adjourn, I have finished my cigar."

They arose from the table and passed from the dining room through the salon into the library and took their seats before the fire as they used to do in the happy years that were no more. What sacred memories those walls enclosed! Of bitter sorrow and of great happiness. It was hither that his arms had daily carried her during the long period of her convalescence after the birth of their first child. For what had seemed to him an eternity she had hovered between life and death. He would never forget the thrill of joy which he experienced when he had learned that she was safe and that he was not to lose her. How ardent were the resolutions he had made in his gratitude to her for what she had undergone in his behalf. What vows of eternal love and faithfulness had fallen from his trembling lips! But as a woman "remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world," so also are her sufferings as quickly forgotten by her husband.

It was here that he had comforted her when after the funeral of their little Jeannette he had returned to the house which seemed so empty

and silent without the lisping of her baby voice. Here the heart-broken mother had sobbed out her grief on his shoulder and in his presence and contact had found some alleviation for her woe.

Each article of furniture and each ornament was endeared to them, and in them could be read the history of their married life—of their numerous voyages. For in their younger days they had traveled much together, but little by little as the years rolled by she had lost her love of movement and had allowed him to go alone. In this could probably be found a cause of their present infelicity. For his frequent absences had taught them that life was possible for each without the other: a knowledge which is fatal to the permanence of matrimonial bliss. This change in their habits could be detected in the altered nature of the later acquisitions, for to the bric-à-brac and furniture of civilized countries had been added the arms and accoutrements of savage nations.

On the table of carved black English oak, by the cigars, lay an embroidery basket from which trailed various colored silks. This juxtaposition was characteristic of the whole room in that it spoke exclusively neither of a man nor of

a woman, but rather of an intimate union of the two.

In addition to the portrait of Madame des Ormes, there adorned the walls numerous examples of the modern schools—French, German and English. Over the doors hung portières of rich Oriental embroidery and on the floor lay a magnificent Bokhara rug. The shelves of the long low mahogany cases were laden with books whose dark bindings were lightened by the glint of gold. On the mantle in silver frames stood the pictures of their children, and in front of Jeannette's stood a vase which a mother's hand kept always filled with fresh cut flowers.

Both Jean and Berthe were softened by the subtle influences of the room and sat awhile in silence, each respecting the other's emotion. Their differences, grave as they were, could not completely destroy the sympathy existing between them, that sympathy which is the result of years of mental and physical contact and which may survive, even when affection has been replaced by hate. Aye, and more than sympathy was there between them, for since she had carried his children his blood coursed through her veins, they had become one flesh—a

unity had resulted as immutable as the foundations of the world.

Thinking it more advisable under the circumstances to leave her undisturbed, Jean glanced at the clock. "It is about nine," he said, "I think that I will walk around to the club and see if Maurice is there. You must be tired and are probably longing to seek your bed." But he was prevented in his intention by the ringing of the doorbell. "Who is it, dear?" he asked as the butler presented her a silver tray on which lay a large sized visiting card.

"It is Boula Omayat. Do not show surprise at his appearance," she cautioned. "He is leader of the sect of the Mystics, with which many of our most intelligent and prominent women are affiliated. Possessed of supernatural powers he has wrought many marvelous cures. Ask him to walk in," she added, turning to the servant, who stood awaiting her orders.

Even warned as he had been by Berthe, Jean could not repess a gesture of astonishment as Boula Omayat, throwing back the portière, paused on the threshold and with hands extended saluted them with a solemn "Oom." This mode of greeting was indeed strange and

alone would have been sufficient to arouse curiosity without the added peculiarity of his appearance.

About sixty-three years of age, of tall and commanding presence, the thick masses of his dark brown hair, streaked with silver, fell in waves to his shoulders, and the bushy beard with which his face was masked descended several inches below his belt. From the midst of this forest of hair, so dense that it almost concealed the great hooked nose, looked out a pair of glittering black eyes remarkable for their brilliancy and fire. The full skirts of his light gray frock coat lined with red almost swept the floor, as after his moment's pause he advanced, his hands still extended, towards the centre of the room.

Jean had arisen and stepped forward to salute his guest. "Touch me not!" the other cried when he became aware of his intention. "I am still vibrating from the utterance of the mystic word which has just fallen from my lips. So mighty and destructive are the vibrations which it induces, that if you were so much as to place your finger tips on mine you would be stricken to the ground Lo! Again I speak it: Oom! Oom!" he repeated, prolonging its pronouncia-

tion until Jean almost fancied that he could feel himself overcome by the waves of sound.

"What do you mean by 'Oom' and what does the word signify?" he asked, much interested.

"Beware, young man," cried the other so suddenly and so loudly that Jean, startled, fell back a step. "Beware how without due preparation you pronounce that sacred word. More than one has fallen victim to his temerity, who uninitiated has allowed it to pass his lips. Were I so to desire I could by its means uproot the pyramids from their foundations and cause the Eiffel Tower to bow its haughty crest and lie prone in the dust."

"Please be careful then how you use it in my house," remonstrated Jean, who by this time had recovered from the surprise excited by the newcomer, "for I have here a large and valuable collection of china and bric-à-brac, which it would greatly distress me to see destroyed."

"Do not scoff, unbeliever," cried Boula, in threatening tones. "When you were afar I saw you and knew your acts—that they were evil. Your poor wife in tears came to me, imploring aid and comfort, and from me she shall have them even at the cost of your destructon."

"Calm yourself, Monsieur Omayat, lower your

voice—the children are asleep. Now I must beg you to excuse me. Do not disturb yourself, but sit down and have a cigar while you explain your mystic sayings to Madame des Ormes. My dear, I congratulate you on the friends you have made while I was away. Good bye, I wish you a pleasant and instructive evening." A moment later they heard the front door close behind him.

III.

In a retired section of the older part of the city, not far from the Hotel de Ville, stood a handsome building of the style and epoch of Louis constructed around the three sides of a was constructed around the three sides of a court, whose fourth side was separated from the street by a wall, through which a wide door gave access to the house within. Everything about the place was solemn and drowsy and so few were the passers-by that the sound of a footstep was sufficient to startle the sleepy porter, who day in and day out sat nodding in his lodge. The neighboring edifices were all of the same general type, and from their walls projected brackets, supporting lamps, which at night did their best to lighten with their flickering flames the darkness of the deserted street.

It was an exclusive and aristocratic quarter, but the exclusiveness was provincial and therefore respectable and dull. Some of these habitations were still in possession of the descendents of the patrician families of the Republic

by whom they had been built, but many, through the decaying fortunes of their former owners, had passed into the hands of the newly-rich.

The hotel itself, with whose description this chapter opens, had been built by the Rainures, one of the most distinguished families of the old aristocracy. Their arms; Azur a chevron or, accompanied by three crosses botonny of the second and surmounted by a count's coronet, could still be seen carved in the stone above the portal.

The last male of the house, Count Raymond de Rainures, an officer in the service of France, had been killed, hunting in Corsica, about the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI. Never having married, his entire fortune together with the family residence had passed to his sister, his only surviving relative. This latter dying had left as sole heiress a daughter whose marriage, which had occurred late in life, had proved childless. The daughter was an eccentric woman and having lost her husband shortly after their union she had led up to the time of her death the life of a recluse. With a hatred such as can be felt only toward the members of one's own family, she had detested her re'ations and at her demise it was discovered that all her

worldly possessions, which were large, had been willed to her gardener and his wife.

Not caring to occupy so vast an establishment, as the *Maison Rainures* the new owners, quite as much surprised as anyone at their own good fortune, had rented it to the Whist Club, the most fashionable organization of its kind in the city. Visitors to this club were few and far between and the salons were generally deserted except for the presence of a few old gentlemen. However, the card room was favored with a certain amount of popularity and was often occupied until early morning by the devotees of baccarat, and it was not uncommon for large sums of money to change hands. Indeed, there was a story current of a Russian of exalted rank, who one night had played and lost his entire fortune, and had only been saved from ruin and disgrace by the personal intervention of the Czar.

Towards this abode of respectability and provincial exclusiveness Jean had directed his steps after leaving his wife. Her acceptance of mystic doctrines and teachings surprised and puzzled him. Since their marriage she had been frankly worldly in her tastes and he could not imagine what had thus warped her mind.

But when we leave for protracted periods those near and dear to us, especially when there has been a serious misunderstanding, strange and unlooked for events are liable to occur. New plants spring up to fill the places left empty by the removal of the old and, alas, too often these new plants are but weeds. How frequently one returns to find himself a stranger, and less than a stranger, in his own familiar abiding place.

On entering the club he awakened the slumbering porter by a touch on the shoulder. "Has Monsieur Maurice de Paquis arrived?" he inquired.

"Not yet, sir, but he generally drops in about this time" replied the old man arousing himself.

With an amused smile Jean watched him gradually doze off again and then made his way to the reading room where buried in great leather covered armchairs he found three or four decrepit habitués nodding over their newspapers. The deep silence was broken only by the crackling of the blazing logs and by an occasional snore from one of the sleeping party.

At a table, carelessly turning over the periodicals, which were there spread out, stood a hale old gentleman, whose sunburnt complexion contrasted most pleasingly with his snow-white hair

and whose whole appearance was suggestive of life and energy. At the sound of Jean's step he looked up." "Jean, my boy," he exclaimed heartily, "I am glad indeed to see you back again after your long absence. It is over a year since you left us, is it not?"

"Just about,—it was a year last month, to be exact. I hope that you have been well and that Madame de Muriel has been the same," he replied as he carelessly picked up a copy of the *Illustration* in which were depicted scenes from the recent revolution in Russia.

"My wife is very well indeed, thank you. Come out to Saint Leger to-morrow and see us; she will be very much offended if you do not."

"Thank you. I will ride out to-morrow afternoon. Meanwhile give her my most affectionate and respectful greeting."

"I will tell her to expect you. Come early, and, by the way, your friend the Pastor Poirier will be there. Good night, I must be going, I have a long drive before me," and giving his hand a vigorous shake, the old gentleman with a half contemptuous and wholly amused glance at the sleeping company took his departure.

Left alone, Jean selected a comfortable chair in a dark corner and, while waiting for Maurice

de Paquis to arrive, reviewed in his mind the events of the day and meditated on the unexpected turn that his life seemed about to take.

"It was curious that Berthe should have changed so," he reflected, "and that the change, despite what she says, should have been so sudden. Of course it is a great deal my own fault, I should have been more careful and remembered that if a man does not look out for his own wife someone else will, for interest in another man is the only explanation of Berthe's conduct. But then we men are so conceited that we are always sure that we shall prove to be an exception to the rule. Also we make the mistake of thinking that the physical repulsion we feel towards other males is felt in the same manner and to the same degree by our women. The idea that a wife could ever care for anyone but himself is so abhorrent to a husband that he eliminates even the possibility of such an event from his calculations. Then Berthe, though still exceptionally handsome, is arriving at the age when a woman is apt to be unduly sensitive. The thought that her husband's neglect may be due to her fading charms and not to the inconstancy natural to man has a tendency to make a wife at her period of life,

resentful. She has undoubtedly been surrounded by flatterers who have turned her against me by insisting on my too well-known infidelities. Well, we must hope for the best while we fear the worst. It seems to me that Maurice is very late this evening. He may have come in and gone directly to the card room. I will go and see."

As he reached the head of the flight of stairs leading to the quarters where the gambling was carried on, the sound of angry excited voices scarcely muffled by the closed door, fell on his ears. "I wonder what can have happened," he thought, as he turned the handle and entered the room. By the table stood a man and on the floor behind him lay an overturned chair, while scattered at his feet were a number of gold coins and bank-notes. He was possibly thirty years of age and his weak boyish face was almost green from shame and humiliation.

"So, Muzart, we have caught you at it again," exclaimed a gentleman seated at the table, apparently the banker. In him Jean recognized Monsieur de Tourville, one of Geneva's most prominent and respected citizens.

"What is wrong?" he asked, much surprised at this unexpected scene of disorder.

"It is only Muzart caught cheating again," answered an elderly player—Marrin, whose broad white beard made him a striking likeness of the King of the Belgians.—"He was detected pushing a hundred franc note over the line."

At this mention of his shameful act the poor wretch, overcome by the realization of his plight, turned a piteous glance on the newcomer. "Mercy!" he murmured as he shrank back.

"Mercy!" cried Monsieur de Tourville in scornful surprise, "you ask for mercy when this is the second time we have detected you. No, there can be none for such as you. Leave the room before you are kicked out."

"Wait a moment," remonstrated Jean, trying to calm the storm. "I am well aware it is none of my business, but it would be much better, if possible, to keep the matter quiet. A scandal would do no good and in these days of rampant socialism, it is better that we should wash our dirty linen in private."

Thinking that here might be a ray of hope Muzart looked at the speaker imploringly. "It is not so much for myself I ask it, but for my wife's sake, for the sake of my innocent little children. Have mercy upon me. Oh, God!" he cried in heartrending tones as he threw himself

sobbing on his knees, his hands extended in appeal. "Oh, God! Is there no hope? Do not bring this disgrace on Jeanne—you know how good and sweet she is. Spare her; she is worn out now by trouble and anxiety. This blow would kill her. Mercy!" And he wrung his hands in agony..

"You should have thought of her before," said Tourville, hardening his voice, though with a perceptible effort.

"So I did, I tried to play fairly and until this evening I had done nothing wrong. I swear it to you. But luck has been against me. I could not bear too ask my poor wife for money to pay my losses. She trembles so when I tell her that I have been losing and turns so pale. She never reproaches me, but the silent tears show that her heart is breaking. My God! my God! I cannot bear it."

"You should have given up playing long ago. No man has the right to rob his wife and children," said Jean, speaking calmly to cloak his emotion.

"What is the use of talking that way to me?" asked Muzart wildly, and he shivered, though the perspiration was streaming down his face. "Of course I ought not to have played, I know

that, but I could not help myself. I shall go mad. My poor Jeanne, my little children." And he sobbed convulsively.

"Come," said Tourville, and now he could scarcely suppress a note of distress at the sight of the poor unmanned creature. "Get yourself together. We forgave you once for your wife's sake and maybe we shall do so again. Muzart, in all your shame and humiliation," and his voice softened, "you may thank God for that precious gift. You have something which but few, even of the richest and the best, have known the joy of possessing: the steadfast and unfailing affection of a true woman."

"How shall I break it to her? I cannot do it. I had rather shoot myself than tell her." With these despairing words, Muzart arose from his knees and sinking into a chair, covered his face with his hands. One by one the hot tears dropped between his fingers.

"For his wife's sake we must do something. We cannot allow this scandal to get abroad," ventured Marrin, passing his fingers rapidly through his beard.

"Yes, on every account," assented Jean, "the matter must be hushed up."

"As I was the principal party concerned this

evening," said Tourville, "will you give me full power to settle the affair and agree to stand by my decision?" Without hesitation they all consented.

After a moment's reflection Tourville turned to the poor wretch. "Muzart, for your wife's sake, whom we all admire and esteem, we are not going to be too severe. All of us here present, will give our word never to reveal what has happened this evening. On your part you must keep it from your wife, it is she we wish to spare. You must give us your solemn pledge never to play again, and also hand in your resignation immediately. Explain your action by saying that you are forced to cut down expenses. Under no circumstances must you ever again set foot within these doors. Will you promise?"

Little by little as the hope revived of keeping his disgrace from becoming public, Muzart raised his head but it was with a voice still broken by sobs that he replied: "Anything,—I will promise anything to spare her."

"Then go to that desk and write out your resignation." Muzart arose and staggered to the writing desk. With a hand that trembled he wrote out the required document. An absolute silence meanwhile prevaded the room. Though

they were men of the world and men of experience, each felt that he had, as it were, a share in the wretch's shame. It is bitter to see one of one's own kind brought so low.

Having finished, he handed the letter to Tourville. No word passed his lips, but his look made up of shame, gratitude, resentment and humiliation was one never to be forgotten. He moved toward the door and fumbled for the handle. An instant later, he had left the room forever.

"I still hold the bank," said Tourville roughly. The others seated themselves and resumed play, but Jean, hoping that Maurice had arrived, left the room and went downstairs.

He entered the library, where he found Maurice absorbed in the *Gaulois*.

"Just read that," said the latter, when his friend's presence had been brought to his attention. "I see here that the Pope has been working miracles with his old slippers. Did you ever read such nonsense? How can any paper publish such foolishness?"

Jean laughed. "You might at least congratulate me upon my return, before entering into a religious discussion," he said, "However, seeing that it is you, I forgive you."

"I behold you before me looking well. Why should I waste my breath in useless inquiries? When did you arrive?" Although the salutation was unusual, the tone of deep affection in which the words were uttered more than compensated for their seeming coldness.

"I arrived this evening just before dinner. Will you not join me in a drink? I have something very important to say to you." He seated himself by his friend and touched the bell for the waiter.

"What was all that row in the cardroom?" queried Maurice, sipping his Scotch and soda.

"What row? I have just come from there. There was no row that I know of," replied Jean carelessly.

"I thought I heard something, but I must have been mistaken. It is of no consequence. You were about to say something to me?"

"Have you ever heard of one Boula Omayat?" asked Jean. "He is a long-haired freak and, I should imagine, some kind of an occult sky-pilot."

"Oh yes, I have often heard of him. In fact I have even assisted at some of his seances. The women seem to be crazy about him, for amongst his other charms he possesses a foolish jargon

that particularly appeals to their—but what makes you ask? Have you already met him?"

"Yes," replied the other. "He was at the house to-night. It appears that Berthe is rather a disciple of his. Do you know where he comes from?"

"No one can say with any degree of certainty. Some claim that he is a Russian spy and others a Nihilist. He may be both or neither for all I know. He drifted here like some modern Cagliostro, and Bornier who always gets hold of queer people, took him up. He is quite the rage amongst the women, especially the temperamental women, who in America are gathered in by the Christian Scientists and other faith healing sects. I do not mean any reflection on your wife, but the mystical and the pseudo-scientific always have appealed to the fair sex, particularly to such of its members as have had disappointments in love affairs."

"He is a friend of Bornier's? of Arthur Bornier's you mean?" asked Jean, who had paid no attention to the latter part of his companion's explanation.

"Why, do you ask?" said Maurice, looking at his friend curiously. "Is there any reason why he should not be?"

"On the contrary. Birds of a feather flock together."

"Rather hard on Arthur, is it not?" remarked Maurice, beginning to wonder at his friend's warmth. "You seem to be prejudiced against him."

"Are you surprised?" replied Jean, not yet wishing to fully explain himself.

These two had been united since their childhood by the closest ties of friendship. Together they had passed through college and the university. Together they had performed their military service in the old First Company of Guides, the finest cavalry organization in Switzerland. Their boyhood intimacy had even survived Jean's marriage, a rare occurrence, for a woman cannot tolerate the friends of her husband's bachelorhood.

Maurice de Paquis was tall and slender. His black mustache was closely trimmed, and his honest sceptical soul looked out through a pair of clear blue eyes. Always dressed in the height of fashion, he was, however, in no sense of the word a fop; and, although appearing on the surface to be nothing more than a man about town, he was on the contrary of a deeply serious nature. Affecting to be never occupied

by anything of a more important character than his social duties he surprised those with whom he came in contact by his learning. Was it fiction that was being discussed, he had read the latest novels in English, French and German. Was the drama the subject of conversation, not only was he well versed in the tragedies of the ancient Greeks, but he was also thoroughly acquainted with the productions of the present day; and from his conversation it was apparent that he was on terms of intimacy with some of the foremost playwrights. He had memorized the scores of many operas, and was an accomplished musician. Philosophy and religion, from the neo-manicheanism of the Eddyites and the veiled mysticism of the Emmanuel movement, to the profound thinking of an Aristotle, a Leibnitz, a St. Paul or a Descartes were perfectly familiar to him. His personal belief could be expressed by the words "I do not know." He freely admitted, however, that he was sceptical of his own scepticism, and claimed that the logical absurdity to which this led was the surest proof of the correctness of his position. "For if," he said, "we could with the finite instrument, which is the human mind, arrive at a logical explanation

of the infinite mystery which is the origin of things, the logical nature of the explanation would be sufficient proof of its own falsity. Trust to science, but do not believe in it. Discover and live by those rules of conduct which experience has shown to be conducive to the welfare of ourselves and others, without attempting to investigate too profoundly their rationality. For any system pushed to its logical conclusion produces an absurdity. And though it is possible to reason by an absurdity, it is impossible to live by it. How can we be happy unless those around us are equally so?" His philosophy was hedonistic and utilitarian. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it shall return unto thee after many days."

Maurice was welcomed in the highest circles of the capitals of Europe and counted among his friends members of some of the reigning families. He had been in the diplomatic service and though a young man had fulfilled several important missions to the entire satisfaction of his government.

After a moment's pause, Jean began, "Maurice, there has been trouble between Berthe and myself."

"That is too bad," replied Maurice, sympathetically, "I hope it is not serious."

"So serious that I have reason to believe that Berthe intends divorcing me," he answered in a dejected tone.

"But what is it all about? There must be some explanation for her acts," said Maurice, looking quizzically at his friend.

Jean half smiled as he replied, "You know as well as I do with what grievances she reproaches me, but I am convinced that she has some other motive."

"But why worry, she is not in a position to prove anything against you," remarked Maurice philosophically, "is she?"

"That I do not know. But even if she were, her position would not be very strong, for I have her letter in which she writes that if I really love her, any infidelities that I might commit in my travels would be readily pardoned."

"What a curious thing to write. She might have thought it, even have insinuated it—but to write it."

"I suppose," said Jean, taking his wife's defence, "that in her estimation marital faithfulness is a question of geographical limits. Evidently deceiving one's wife when ten thousand

miles away is quite a different matter from doing so in the city in which you reside, especially if it is a small one. Then I believe that she was so fond of me that she would have done anything to increase my well-being and comfort, there being no slight in a husband's unfaithfulness when far away.

"Yes. That is evident. And even more, I believe that a woman who would not object in the slightest to her husband's infidelity with *cocottes* would highly resent any such proceedings with a woman of her own rank. But I am a bachelor and only speak from hearsay," concluded Maurice.

"Your impression is correct, for Berthe herself has told me as much. And now having settled the point that she has no valid cause of complaint can you tell me"—here Jean hesitated —"what influence can have turned her against me?"

Maurice reflected a moment. "I cannot say that I can," he replied.

"What conclusion would you draw from this?" asked Jean, "I return and find our old butler Alfred dismissed and his place taken by a creature of Bornier's. My children talk of nothing but 'Uncle' Arthur, referring to this same Bor-

nier. My wife has become the dupe of some fraudulent mystic. Whose protégé do I find him to be? Bornier's!" As Jean continued he raised his voice, "G—— d—— him! I am pursuaded that it is he who is the cause of everything."

"People will hear you if you speak so loud," cautioned Maurice. "There is no use getting excited about it. First determine the exactness of your suspicions then we can decide on what to do. Above all take no violent measures without consulting me. Promise me this."

"Yes, I promise you, but", and Jean's face assumed an ugly expression, "if I find that it is Bornier who has influenced Berthe against me, I pity him. That is all."

"Do not forget your promise. Be careful, here comes Garnier," he cautioned, as they were interrupted by the approach of a short dark man with extremely bright eyes and a heavy black mustache. His clothes were flashy and there were too many rings on his fingers.

"So here you are back again, des Ormes," said the newcomer cheerfully.

"Yes, here I am again at home. Will you not sit down and join us?"

"Certainly, with pleasure, but I have only a moment to spare."

"Maurice and I," explained Jean, "have been discussing women, marriage and divorce."

"Good God, what frightful themes," cried Garnier comically. "And what does Maurice think of them?"

"Many things," replied the latter, "and first of all, you may be surprised to hear me say so, but I thoroughly disapprove of divorce."

"Therein I heartily disagree. Blessed be he who invented that most beneficial institution," cried Garnier emphatically. "My ex-wife, the mother of my children, as I call her, and I, agreed before we married, that if either found the tie becoming irksome, the other would join in asking for its dissolution. As you know, we carried out our pre-nuptial agreement."

"But look," remonstrated Jean, "at the examples we have amongst our friends—of couples who on the verge of divorcing refrained from doing so and how thankful they are that they acted as they did. Time softens so many things and events with the lapse of years are wont to assume their proper proportions."

"And I imagine," replied Garnier, "that there are others who regretted all the remainder of

their lives that they did not take the step in time. Not to speak of those who, miserable with their first choices, are living happily with their second. However that may be, God knows that we must do something to curb the growing insolence of the fifth estate. Yes," he explained, as the others looked up in surprise, "we had the rebellion of the third estate against the power of the nobles and the church. Then came the rising of the workers, or as they are sometimes called, the fourth estate, against the oppression of the possessors. And now the fifth estate, woman, lovely woman, is in open insurrection."

"Of course, Garnier, you recognize that this is a decided step backward," said Mauice reflectively, "a return to a more primitive civilization —I might even say to a more primitive type of being. You see," he continued, "specialization is the sign of progress. The doctrine of evolution might be defined, as a statement of the line along which heredity or succession with variation differentiates and specializes, converting the homogenous into the heterogeneous. An example of this is the division of labor, such a marked feature of our epoch."

"I do not doubt the correctness of your defini-

tion," said Garnier, "but what on earth has it to do with woman's rights?"

"Why everything. Primitive forms of life are hemaphroditic in their nature. Higher in the stage of development we find the male and the female, each with its separate functions. Finally, after many steps we arrive at the human family; the wife risking her life in child-birth, the husband his on the field of battle, in the defence of his home. The male going out into the world to procure the food; the female remaining in the house to care for their joint offspring. Each task as noble as the other. But now the fair sex wishes to rob us of our specialty. Women wish to compete with us in the economic field and by thus combining two functions they would force society into making a decided step backward—from heterogeneity to homogeneity."

"All I can say," broke in Garnier, "is that we ought to specialize a bit more. Do as the Greeks did. Keep our wives at home to bring children into the world and to look after them. Then organize another class of women, quite as highly respected, who would serve to amuse us with their conversation and by their charm and beauty comfort us and give us relaxation after the troubles of the day."

"But there is such a class," said Jean.

"Maybe there is, but it is not respected as it should be," laughed Garnier. "And talking of *cocottes,*" he continued, "have you ever noticed that pretty women are interested in them, whereas ugly, angular ones hate them?"

"Often," replied Maurice, "and I believe the explanation to be that these latter look on their frail sisters as false comrades. The good workman is not afraid of the non-union man, but the poor one is. These *cocottes,* underbid the market, by not insisting on permanent engagements, and thus make it more difficult for those to find mates whose only assets are their enforced and hateful virtue."

Garnier smiled. "Thank you for your explanation. You throw a new light on the subject. Goodnight, I must be leaving. My compliments to Madame." And he sauntered off.

"And now, Jean," said Maurice, "cheer up. You are still young and if the worst comes to the worst, charming as Berthe is, there are other women in the world. Above all, do not take things practically. Meditate on these lines of the ancient Greek poet:

'Thou feel'st but little pain or smart,
Unless thou'lt feign and act a part.'

Come, we will run over to the casino; Rita is expecting me. The change will do you good."

Jean consented, and in a few moments they were driving past the old Hotel de Ville towards the lower town and the bridges, on the other side of which lay their destination.

IV.

THE yearning of the human soul to draw back, where it but a little, the curtain that conceals with its impenetrable folds the mystery of the origin of things is inappeasable. The soul longs to predicate of the infinite and to reduce to terms or relativity the self-existant.

As long as religion is content to restrict itself to its philosophical domain and is satisfied with its role not of explaining—that were impossible—but of attempting to explain what the nature of a first cause might be, and of inculcating certain hypostasized rules of conduct, all is well. A few miracles, if frankly attributed to a direct and special intervention of the Deity, could not be considered objectionable, on the contrary, they would by their appeal to our credulity and love of wonder, aid religion in her difficult task as a regulator of human action.

So long as Science remains within its legitimate sphere, which is that of ascertaining and collating facts and of drawing from them their logical conclusions, it is man's greatest aid. But

let it once soar off into the realm of the unknowable, let it advance theories to explain the general scheme of things—in one word—let it dogmatize; and it becomes more dangerous to human progress than the lowest superstition. Let it once use the words "I believe" and it is lost.

A young man once said, and he was very young indeed, "Religion is nonsense, I believe in evolution." As if evolution were a question of belief or as if it did more than point out the series of steps by which progress has been made. It attempts no explanation of the impelling force. It were as marvellous to see an inert body mount the stairs, step by step, as to behold it at one bound negotiate the entire flight. It is a question of degree and not of kind.

In like manner religion when it attempts to furnish solutions for natural phenomena stultifies itself; but the most disastrous consequences may be looked for when an unholy alliance is openly formed between the two. When the ecclesiastic attempts to cloak his thaumaturgical operations with a covering of scientific nomenclature, it is indeed time to call a halt. Their pseudo-scientific jargon appeals to

the unintelligent and to those who possessing neither the capacity nor the ability to acquire true erudition desire, nevertheless, at small expense of time and trouble to appear before their friends as luminaries of wisdom. It is easier to become a Christian Scientist than either a Christian or a scientist, the former demanding unselfishness, the latter calling for prolonged effort.

With the decay of a traditional religion and the growth of a purely materialistic conception of life, it were rash to venture an opinion as to which of the two is the cause and which the effect. Scores of strange and occult beliefs make their appearance. They glow on the rotting faith as phosporous on a corpse. Nor are our own times an exception, for to-day phenomena may be observed similar to those occurring in the eighteenth century. Counts of Saint Germain and Cagliostros abound under other names and disguises. On every hand we find new cults arising and even the old and heretofore respectable religious organizations are being affected by the movement. And it is natural that occultism and healing sects should flourish in a materialistic age. Occult science was the physical science of the middle ages and occultism

is in a certain sense the glorification of matter endowing it as it does with certain virtues. Why, after having for so long declared the age of miracles to be past, are the Protestant sects now turning their attention to the cure of disease, if it is not that they recognize the overwhelming importance that physical well-being has acquired in the eyes of their adepts? Mrs. Eddy, if any intelligible signification may be attributed to her writings, denies the existence of matter; yet her claim as leader of a new religion is based on her pretended powers of procuring to her followers the advantages of health and wealth. Her position is illogical, but consistent with her aims.

We are now on the crest of a wave of occultism and some day the reaction must come. For this reason, great as Wagner undoubtedly is, it is not probable that from the standpoint of drama his work will ever be more than sporadically popular. In his occultism he is but a symptom of the tendency of the day as are the leaders of other healing and esoteric movements.

Berthe was no exception to this general rule. In her youth her passionate nature had expressed itself in religious fervor and in a blind attachment to the Church of Rome; an ardent

faith in whose teachings had been one of her pronounced characteristics. New emotions had since her marriage forced these feelings into the background and little by little her belief had fallen from her until naught of it remained, save a vague sentimentalism which made her especially receptive to occult teachings. Let us now return to her and Boula Omayat.

When after Jean's departure, they found themselves alone Boula sank to the floor and beneath the niche, where reposed in peaceful dignity the statue of the Krihsma he crossed his legs in the familiar sitting posture of a Yogi. With eyes tightly closed, forwards and backwards he rocked, droning out in sleepy tones a monotonous repetition of his "Oom," "Oom," "Oom."

Although Madame des Ormes was possessed of a keen sense of humor, such influence had this strange being acquired over her that the ridiculousness of the situation failed to appeal to her. It did not appear unnatural or strange that her middle-aged guest should sit on the floor cloaked in his luxuriant hair, his gray coat-tails spreading over the dark red of the Bokhara rug, while in a sing-song voice he chanted his cabalistic term. The ceremony to her

seemed of the greatest moment and importance. In conformity with instructions she stared intently with wide-open eyes at his swaying body and strained her ears to catch every modulation of his dull low voice. So fixed was her attention that it was not long before she had fallen into a semi-hypnotic state and the objects that surrounded her, losing the sharpness of their outlines, appeared to her as in a glass, darkly. Then in a far-away voice Boula began.

"My sister," he said, "you are an adept initiated into the mysteries of our holy faith and well know that 'Oom' is the name which in trembling reverence we apply to the Divine love. Never as you value your soul's health let it pass your lips in the presence of that ribald scoffer whom you still call your husband." He ceased and once more for a time became absorbed in contemplation. Then rising,—and to his dupe's distorted view he seemed to float through the air,—he glided in the steps of a mystic dance over the rug and the polished floor to where she sat. From a silver flask of Oriental workmanship he sprinkled her three times, uttering at each aspersion his "Oom."

"This water," he explained, as he resumed his place, "was brought at the expense of tears and

blood from the sacred river Bad-a-bil, hidden far in the depths of the Himalayas. On the banks of this stream for many years, years that I cannot count, has sat a mighty Yogi whose name it were death to mention. In ages long gone by he concentrated himself on Krishna and with time he made that concentration absolute and constant and now he has absorbed the attributes of Krishna and he has absorbed the love of Krishna. It was he who added to the already sacred nature of this water by blessing it. As sure as to-morrow's sun shall rise it shall bring happiness on him on whom its wonder working drops shall fall."

"How may I thank you?" she said. The cool water had partially aroused her, but through her clenched teeth the words were scarcely intelligible. "All I have is money and that is but dross." With an ecstatic movement she flung her golden purse at his feet.

"Sister," he replied as he clutched the jewelled bauble, "the task alloted me on earth was not the amassing of wealth and treasure, but the comforting of the broken hearted, the healing of the sick and the showing forth of the truth. Not long since I was called to a desolated home, where on his bed lay the father cold and stark,

sleeping his last sleep. At my call the flown spirit once more returned to its earthly habitation. What mysterious depths had released that spirit from their thrall? Who can know or who can tell? Who would dare to fathom such inscrutable mystery? When the wife offered me gold I scornfully refused. Such gifts as mine are not for sale. From this learn my thoughts."

"Forgive me, Boula, and also pardon him who after the flesh is the father of my children."

"Know my sister that there is no fatherhood save one only," and his voice was filled with reproach. "Yet since for a short space this mocker is still your earthly husband, I, at your request, will spare him. But the hour is at hand when your bonds shall be broken and you shall be united to your soul's affinity. But silence now," he continued, "and listen, for to your believing ears I am about to reveal the far distant past and show you as you were in former incarnations." Crossing his arms his oscillating movements ceased, his eyes became fixed and stony, his body stiff and rigid. At last he spoke, and his voice sounded as if it came from a great distance.

"Now I have achieved my aim," she heard him

say, "for Krishna has disappeared and the pearl —the great pearl—which hung between the eyes of Krishna is gone, and I can perceive naught but the imaginary point which it covered on his divine countenance. Now thou takest form before me as thou wert when centuries and centuries ago thou didst live and walk a princess of Babylon. Thy scented ebon hair is bound with strings of gems and on thy forehead gleams a wondrous diamond, but its light is not brighter than thine eyes. Thy voluptuous form is clothed in royal purple. Thoughtless, beautiful and happy thou makest the joy of thy father's court, but thou givest no care to thy soul's salvation. What is this that is now made clear to me, that between thee and thy husband all is not well? Now there appears another, a man knowing and practicing the truth. A great love binds him to thee and thee to him, but thou wilt not open the heart to receive the spirit of all things. Thou dost close the door of the soul. For this sin—the great and only sin—thou shalt suffer. I see thee dying, calling for thy lover, from whom thou shalt be separated until such time as due expiation shall have been made. Meanwhile thy soul wandereth in the forms of beasts and pariahs. Now

the time of thy salvation draws near for thou hast learned to know and acknowledge that which is and without which there is nothing. Be sure thou shalt not lose thy reward." He ceased and with a sigh resumed his normal manner.

A feeling of displeasure was aroused in Berthe by his words. The scarcely veiled allusions to her difficulties with Jean were exceedingly distasteful to her. Not that she felt the slightest diminution of her anger, but she was actuated by that instinct of solidarity which impels a woman to resent any reference to her domestic difficulties and to take the defence of her husband. She herself may speak of her troubles and complain of his acts, but her indignation is aroused by another's meddling, even if she was the first to broach the subject. The fact that her love passages with Arthur were thus almost openly hinted at came upon her as a shock even in her half-dazed condition.

Something in her attitude revealed to the keen perception of the Yogi that he had gone too far and his sensitive nature quickly detected the as yet undefined attitude of hostility which his words had provoked. Desiring above all things to retain the influence which he had acquired,

he determined to regain, by exciting her superstitious dread, the ground which he had lost. With this intention he excused himself for a moment and left the room.

When he reappeared he carried a large satchel, from the depths of which he produced a variety of articles. "This," he explained, as he placed on the table a plate which presented the appearance of being of chiselled gold, "is the mystic disk on which shall repose the antidiluvian toad. This toad," he continued, as he took the reptile from its coffer and lovingly handled it, "I discovered imbedded in the solid rock. In this inviolable retreat he had lived since the world's early youth, until I, by my arts, released him. When Adam for the first time looked on Eve in the Garden this creature had existed for uncounted ages. Yea, when years before even this remote epoch he, our first father, clasped in his embrace his demon wife Lileth, it was scarce younger than to-day. Now behold that which has been given to but few mortals to gaze on."

With these words, into which he had infused all the solemn meaning that his marvellously souple voice was capable of conveying, he placed the reptile in the salver and from a gourd engraved with Christian symbols he poured water enough to wet its feet. "This water," he informed her, "was blessed by the Pope himself,

and in this box," with impressive gesture he held before her eyes a casket of finely wrought gold, "is contained the Sacred Host. All is ready." He approached Berthe, who half-dazed, with trembling mouth, was watching his proceedings, and by a few passes produced in her once more a state of semi-hypnotism. When the arrangements had been completed to his satisfaction, he extinguished the electricity. The room was dark, save for the flickering light of the taper he had placed beside the toad.

"Be careful, Chela," he cautioned her in warning tones. "Be careful how you breathe, for the breath is the pendulum of the mind. Breathe fast and excitement will agitate your soul. Breathe slowly and your being will be pervaded by infinite peace. Forget not this warning, for the devil is about to appear incarnate in your presence. Once before did he take form at my behest and show himself to him who was regent of France during the minority of Louis XV. He the master of the world shall become as if he were of matter. How great a miracle! For as the tenets of our belief have shown you, matter does not exist. It is but nothing vibrating infinitely fast, and is therefore nothing."

What followed seemed to Berthe's half-stupified senses the illusions of some horrid dream. First the Yogi baptized the toad in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Then anointing it with the consecrated oil he confirmed it in the faith. He gave it absolution from its sins and conferred on it the sacrament of orders. In the abnormal state to which her will power had been reduced the hypnotized woman did not so much as utter the feeblest protest. But when Boula taking the consecrated wafer placed it in the grinning mouth of the unclean reptile, every fibre of her nature rebelled, her self-control returned and she sprang forward to prevent the sacrilege. Her resistance was but momentary, for the Yogi by a pass forced here to resume her seat and proceeded to accomplish his impious designs. As the last words of the sacrament of extreme unction fell from his lips the toad began to kick and leap spasmodically Slowly in the darkness a figure took shape before her frightened eyes. No sign of sex was there about its naked form. The face in the dim light was beautiful and sad. In the eyes Berthe seemed to read all the wisdom of the universe.

"Lo! I. the Master of the World, am here be-

fore you. At your summons I have come. What will you of me?" cried the apparition. The voice filled the room as with the swelling tones of a great organ, then it faded until it became as gentle as the sighing of the summer breeze among the tree-tops.

"Oh! Master, grant to this, my disciple, that she may know what the future has in store for her," said the fakir in a reverential voice, as he bowed himself to the ground, his arms crossed on his breast.

"Great happiness shall be hers," and again the organ tones pervaded the apartment. "Great happiness shall she know, since she has come to me who hold in my hand the secret of all things and the gifts of joy and beauty. It was I who in the Garden of Eden, essayed, by endowing man with life and knowledge, to free him from the evil and the ills his ignorance entailed. But in His jealousy mine enemy the God of Israel cursed me, and my strivings were in vain. Lest man should become even as Himself, He forbade his eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and since then the human race has wallowed in ignorance and sin. For ages hath the world been crushed beneath the foot of the priests, who, at Jehovah's behest have essayed to bury all in an

impenetrable darkness. But useless have been their efforts. The spark of wisdom lit by Adam in the Garden, by his refusal to submit and to obey, hath never been allowed to die. My followers hidden in the distant corners of the earth have through all ages nursed the precious element, at times fearing for their lives at the hands of God's servants. But now my day is come. I am beautiful and strong with youth, God is shrivelled and impotent with years. I offer you joy and light and love; He, but suffering, darkness and the coldness of the monk's cell. Bow thy knee to me, acknowledge me to be thy master and thou shalt learn to know happiness and joy."

As the significance of these words penetrated Berthe's deadened consciousness she shuddered. The Yogi once more bowed low and the apparition faded.

"Chela," said Boula softly, "you heard the Master's word." As he spoke he passed his hand across her forehead. With a start she came to herself and gazed bewilderedly about the room. "To-morrow, as was arranged, I lunch with you," he continued. "Now others call me and I must be gone." So saying he departed.

It was a long time before Berthe was sufficiently herself to reflect collectedly on the events

of the evening. "What does this mean?" she thought. "Can it really be that it is the devil who promises me joy and happiness? Shall I accept his gifts or shall I cry, 'Get thee behind me Satan?' "

After all, she was but a weak woman battling against her better self. She had striven for years to retain her husband's affection and to show herself worthy of the trust the birth of her children had imposed, and now her efforts having proved vain can we blame her for hesitating whether or not to seek her happiness where she thought it lay? Her sudden passion for Arthur seemed to promise her a compensation for the bitter disappointment which had been her life with Jean.

Arthur, for purposes of his own, had known how to take advantage of her weaknesses. He had expressed his admiration for her in the thousand and one ways that render the would-be lover more pleasing to the object of his assiduities than the lover, and even the latter more agreeable than the husband. There in the room filled with those many sacred memories she sat and pondered.

She had loved Jean when she had married him, and even now after all her wrongs, there re-

mained at the bottom of her heart a certain tenderness which even the violent revulsion in her feelings had failed to kill. She had admired him for his strength and intelligence, although with this admiration there was mingled a slight contempt for his irresolution and incapacity. Repeatedly had she forgiven him his notorious infidelities and striven by her caresses to regain her dominion over his impressionable heart.

Divorce had been rendered repugnant to her through the influence of her earlier education and the teachings of the Catholic Church, of which in her youth she had been such an ardent member. But to what other conclusion could her love for Arthur lead? To be sure she could accept him as a lover, but the thought of the resulting dual intimacy filled her with disgust. Besides, she felt that the concealment necessary for the carrying on of an intrigue and the difficulty of being discreet in a small city would in the end dishearten her.

Then the memory of her wrongs came over her in a flood of horror and disgust. "Ah! All these years of misery and neglect," she cried; "the thought drives me mad. I cannot bear it and I will not." Alas, all these years of misery

and neglect. Was it really as bad as this? Were there no bright spots amid the dark shadows? Reader, did you ever watch a range of snow-clad mountains towards the set of the sun? First in their majestic purity they stand forth white and gleaming in the full glare of day. Then pink and glorious they shine with the brightness of the Alpine glow. As the shadow lengthen, darkness embraces them and they confront us black and forbidding. It is not different with the events of our lives. They are brightened and rendered beautiful by the light we call love, or made hideous by the darkness which is known as hate. The events are the same, nor have the mountains changed; yet all is different.

As she recalled to her mind the past, and rehearsed the history of her wrongs, it seemed to her as if she felt once more the pang of actual physical pain which had pierced her heart, when first she had acquired the certainty of her husband's infidelity. That feeling of horror and disgust was renewed which had invaded her whole being, when the truth had been forced upon her and she could no longer close her eyes. This sentiment had been aroused not so much by the knowledge of the wrongful act which had been his, as by the thought that she had been

made a party to it; that in a certain measure her own body had been polluted.

She heard once more in her ears the tone of her husband's voice as he pleaded with her; she felt once more the tears of gratitude which had fallen on her hands when she had freely forgiven. For a while, she remembered, he had been faithful to his renewed pledges, then rumors of a new entanglement had been brought to her by loving friends. This time the blow had not come as such a shock, and consequently her distress had been less keen. Again she had forgiven, and again he had proven untrue. And so she had continued forgiving his frequent failings, concealing even from herself her evergrowing desire for revenge. As time passed, her sorrow became less acute and she had passively consented to sharing him with his mistresses.

His absence had brought matters to a climax and in this year there had been lost to him the power which is inherent in constant personal contact. "Poor Jean," she thought, as in the stillness the clock ticked the minutes away, the same clock that had ticked the minute of her baby's death, "Poor Jean, perhaps he does love me, who can tell? But when I think of how unhappy he has made me, I wonder why I have

remained faithful to my vows, he has broken his so often. Why should not I have taken a lover as so many of my friends have done? Arthur would, I am sure, be only too willing to accept the role. I have thought of this, but always at the last moment I have drawn back. Decidedly I was made to be an honest woman. Is it possible that a man ever really respects the woman that has given herself? I once asked Arthur this question. He, of course, said 'Yes.' What else in his position could he say? But I am afraid that he was lying. I suppose it depends a great deal on their characters and how deep and true their passion is. If she has acted from a mere caprice, he surely must despise her, though the case may be different if they really love. Then there are the children to be taken into consideration. A divorce would certainly be hard on them. But I cannot help it, it is all his fault, he should have thought of them himself."

Exhausted by the emotions of the day and rendered sleepy by the drug absorbed at dinner, she retired to her room. As she undressed, the familiar surroundings recalled to her the many times when in this self-same room her heart had beaten wildly at the sound of her husband's step.

But resolutely she put the thought away from her, and soon was tossing in a restless sleep, whose dreams were filled with visions of devils and of Arthur.

V.

Although Geneva does not depend for her prosperity, as do so many of the other towns of Switzerland, on the influx of tourists during the summer season, it has been thought proper to make some provision for the amusement of such travelers as honor the city with their visits. With this object in view a casino or kursaal has been built, in a commanding position on the *quai* which borders the right bank of the lake. From its terrace a magnificent panorama greets the eye of the loiterer, sipping his cooling drink at one of the little tables there placed for his convenience. To the right lies the harbor, protected by a breakwater whose extremity is ornamented by a miniature lighthouse. Above and back of the modern buildings, by which this harbor is encircled, rises the hill covered by the old city and crowned by the towers of St. Peter's. To the left spread the waters of the lake, dotted here and there with the lateen sails of the stone-bearing barges. Across its brilliant blue the vine-clad hills of Cologny are to be seen sloping

to the water's edge, in autumn bright with brown and golden tints. In the middle ground stand the Salève and the Voirons, and back—far, far away, in the depths of Savoy, rise the snow-clad Alps, whose mysterious heights are dwarfed by the Mont Blanc towering in its majestic grandeur.

In the interior of the above mentioned establishment are to be found reading rooms furnished with newspapers from all parts of the globe, for the information of its cosmopolitan clientele. There is also a theatre, in which high grade vaudeville performances are given, and last, but not least, handsomely decorated gambling rooms and a well-appointed bar.

Although games of chance on any part of the territory of the Swiss Confederation are forbidden by the Federal constitution, the "*petits cheveaux*" are here tolerated, presumably on the ground that they are not roulette. There is a great deal in a name for, as many New Yorkers know, the "sacred concert" is not a variety show, and an antique sandwich is frequently mistaken for a meal.

The thoughtful visitor who, standing by, should watch in the glare of the electric light the mingled crowd of gentlemen and adventurers,

of ladies and cocottes, pressing around the gaming table, would be surprised that such a scene could be enacted in the austere city of Calvin. Things have indeed changed since that bilious reformer decreed that pleasure was sin and that only a long face could be pleasing to the Almighty. Perhaps, however, the reaction has been too severe, and in our pursuit of pleasure we have grown indifferent as to what is sin and what is consistent with the principles of the all-seeing Father. But in case of doubt let us decide the question in our own favor, for it is better to enjoy than to be mournful, and, if when we die we shall be called to give an account of the works done in the body, it is those things we have left undone, and not those which we have done, which will count the heaviest against us, as the parable of the sheep and the goats quite clearly shows.

Leaving philosophy, let us return to the casino. As has been insinuated, amongst its *habituées* were counted many ladies who could not with any reasonable hope of success lay claim to the prize for virtue. In fact, to be frank, the unchaste sisterhood was here represented by its members most in vogue, and by its choicest beauties. Amongst others

assembled in the gambling hall, the evening that our story opens, was Rita, the acknowledged mistress of Maurice de Paquis, awaiting the promised arrival of her protector. Small, dark and vivacious, the pecuniary advantages which had resulted to her from this *entente cordiale* were reflected in the glittering elegance of her gown. The negligent way in which she threw her five-franc pieces on the table, and the supreme indifference with which she saw them raked in by the voracious croupier, would have proclaimed to even the most casual observer that she had fallen on good days. What matter if she did lose, for, paraphrasing the words of the late King Milan of Servia "was not Maurice still there?"

At Rita's side, neatly but less handsomely gowned, and more careful of her resources, stood her most intimate friend, Ninette, still distressed over the recent death of her lover Charles Morniac, a most excellent but impecunious young man. Unlike Rita, she was quite poor. The small provision that had been made for her was exhausted, and she was supporting herself, until such time as she could discover a more permanent source of supplies, by a most distasteful promiscuity. She was a

slender, fair-haired, charming, little creature, who under happier circumstances would have made an excellent wife, for her heart overflowed with devotion to the man at whose expense she happened to be living.

Many others there were, some few young and attractive, but the majority old and worn, with haggard chalky faces, whose dead white the brilliant electric illuminations rendered still more ghastly. From these powdered masks, to which the blood-red lips lent a clown-like appearance, from beneath the masses of blond and curly hair, bold black eyes looked out in search of clients.

The atmosphere of the hall was oppressive and trying; the dampness drifting in from the rainy night had intensified the penetrating qualities of the perfumes with which the air was laden, and had increased the acridity of the *odor feminae* exhaled from the nervous and excited women. All were in constant motion and the high-pitched voices of the girls, mingling with the deep tones of the men, produced on the ears the effect of a loud buzz, over which at regular intervals predominated the calls of the croupiers.

Elbowing his way through the crowd a large

and powerfully built individual advanced towards where Ninette and Rita were standing. A small head with low-browed bearded face, whose sensual features spoke of passions uncontrolled by any higher feelings, surmounted the herculean form and the long arms terminated in immense hairy hands. The thumbs were short, with broad flat nails, the fingers square and thick at the roots. Everything about the man bespoke the low and brutal.

"Hello, little girl," he said, with a pronounced Russian accent, when he had gained Rita's side. From his greater height he looked down into her corsage, and in a voice so low that only she could hear, he made some remark, which, from the leer in his face, was unquestionably indecent. Not having to rely for her daily bread on a universal cordiality, Rita resented his impertinence and ordered him to leave. He paid no attention to her indignation, except to give a loud insulting laugh. He had been followed by a young man who, placing himself at Ninette's elbow commenced recklessly throwing his money on the table. This man, about thirty years old, though not of unpleasing appearance, was excessively bad style, being what the English

would call a "bounder." His manner was offensive, and his actions towards the woman showed the profound contempt in which he held her—a contempt which is felt by no right-minded gentleman towards the unfortunates of her profession. She, poor girl, not being as independent as her friend, was forced to restrain her anger. "Bornier," she said, "you seem to have a bad run this evening. Do you not think you had better stop or let me play for you? It might change your luck."

"There is plenty more where this came from," said Arthur, "and, anyway, do you think I would be so green as to allow you to play for me? No, my friend, I am on to your tricks and the tricks of all of your kind." At which Ninette turned her head away. "What is the matter? What makes you huffy?" he continued, grasping her by the elbow.

"Leave me alone, you have no right to act that way," she remonstrated.

"No right? Why any man has the right to act as he pleases with you, if he pays. Here, take this," and he held her out a louis. She struck it from his hand to the floor.

"Stop," said a young man, Jacques Grandin

by name, who happened to be passing. "Do you not see that you are annoying her?"

"Mind your own business," replied Arthur. Having had enough of play, he signed to the Russian to follow, and disappeared in the direction of the bar.

The rain was still pouring steadily as Jean and Maurice hurried from their cab across the wet pavement, glistening under the light of the sputtering arc lamps, and were engulfed in the cosmopolitan throng.

"There is Ninette talking to Rita," said Maurice, as he forced his way in the direction indicated. "So she is back from Paris. You know her, do you not?"

"If you mean poor Charles Morniac's Ninette, of course I know her. Where is she? I shall be glad to see her again, and Rita also."

"There they are, standing by the table in the middle of the hall." As Maurice spoke, Ninette, glancing over her shoulder, recognized them and beckoned smiling. "Why, Ninette, how do you do?" said Jean, when through the press around the table he had succeeded in gaining her side. "You are looking as charming as ever."

"Do you think so? I do not know whether or not you are telling the truth, but anyway I

am glad to see you back. Since we last met I have been in deep trouble. My poor Charles! I miss him so much, and life has never been the same to me since his death. But let us not think of these sad things; tell me about yourself and what you have been doing this long while."

As for Rita, having saluted Maurice with an engaging smile, she was excitedly complaining to him about the Russian's conduct. "Really, Paulovotich had no right to speak to me as he did, nor to look down the front of my dress. I am a respectable girl, I would have him know. He had better be careful or I will tell Masoushka of his conduct."

"What did he say to you?" asked her lover, who, although angered at the man's impertinence, could not help being amused at his little friend's indignation.

"Never you mind, my dear," she replied, tapping him with her fan with one hand, and with the other tossing a coin on the table, "but I assure you it was extremely indecent."

"Shall I go and thrash him?"

"No, he is not worth it. Leave him alone. He and Bornier make a fine pair."

"Yes," continued Ninette to Jean, "it was terrible about my poor Charles." She paused a

moment to look at him invitingly—"But the world will not stop for any one of us. He was a good friend and a generous one. His family helped me too, but money will not last forever. Since he died I have seen hard times."

"Here, try your luck with this," said Jean, passing her a five franc piece.

"Thank you—see I put it on the number seven, for Charles and I were together twice seven months. Perhaps it may bring me luck." As the horses stopped whirling, "Number six wins!" cried the croupier, and her wager with many others was gathered in by his greedy rake.

"You see," she said, "luck is against me in everything."

"Try again; luck is bound to turn," he encouraged her, as he gave her another coin; but again she lost. After several more turns of the little horses, unsuccessful as far as she was concerned. "There is an empty table in the bar," she said: "let us have something to drink, I am thirsty." Nodding to Maurice and Rita, who smiled back, they made their way to the quiet corner. Scarcely had they taken their seats, and given their order to the waiter, when a loud crash rang through the room followed by a volley of oaths. "What is that?" Jean asked, leaping

to his feet. Ninette looked up. "It is that scamp Paulovitch making trouble. See, they are picking up a champagne bottle. He must have thrown it at some one. He is always up to mischief, he and Arthur Bornier. You ought to have heard the way they insulted Rita and me this evening. On second thought, however, I am glad that you had not yet arrived, there would have been a terrible scandal."

She raised her glass to her lips and smiled. "Sit down, Jean," she continued. "It is not anything. He is always bothering the girls, or up to some devilment. He ought to be expelled from the Canton."

Seeing that it was indeed as she had said, and that two secret service men were dragging Paulovitch, securely handcuffed and cursing vigorously, Jean resumed his seat. "He certainly ought," he assented, and with him all the other Nihilists. We have entirely too many of his kind in the country. But you will see instead of expelling him they will simply turn him loose in the street. Why, look! there is Arthur Bornier following him."

"Who resemble, assemble," remarked the girl sententiously. When the excitement had subsided, and order had once more been restored,

"did you have a pleasant voyage?" she queried.

"Very. I have been shooting in Africa, as you may have heard. There is plenty of game, but the girls are hardly as pretty as those one finds here."

She smiled. "They are black and greasy, are they not?"

"Yes; I cannot say that they are very attractive, but then as you are aware hunger knows no law."

"I saw Madame des Ormes the other day, at the opera," went on Ninette. She had a lot of people in her box. By the way, Arthur Bornier was one of them. She was looking very well and seemed extremely gay."

"Is the opera good this year?" he asked, by way of saying something.

"Yes, it is excellent, and the tenor is quite remarkable. They sang Massenet's 'Manon' and 'La Vie de Boheme' really very well. Puccini's 'Vie de Boheme' I like so much better than Leoncavallo's 'Boheme,' do not you?"

"Indeed I do, but I must admit that I admire some of Leoncavallo's works immensely. Take his 'Paillasse,' for instance," qualifying his assent.

"Yes, that is lovely," she cried, enthusiasti-

cally. Then, lowering her voice, "look over there," she said, as she pointed to a young Russian who was lounging near them. "That man is a friend of Bornier's."

"Is he? Well, what of it?"

"Nothing. Only you must be careful when any of that bounder's chums are around. Excuse me for speaking that way of your friend, but I really could not help it."

"Why do you dislike him?" asked Jean, "what has he done so very terrible?"

"Do you not remember that he was Vera de Villefleurie's friend? You surely must recall that they were together for several years."

"Of course I do. It was even rumored that they were to be married. She was a handsome girl when she made her first appearance here. Such beautiful eyes, such a sweet expression about the mouth."

"And she was as good as she was beautiful," said Ninette earnestly. "She deserved a better fate than to be tied up with Arthur, that low, drunken thief."

"That is pretty strong language, is it not, little girl? What did he do to her?"

"Do you mean to say that you have never heard the story?"

"I have heard something, but I never knew the exact truth. Tell it to me."

"Certainly. But there is the bell ringing for the next act. Do you want to go in and see it?"

"I do not care about it, if you do not. I would much rather sit with you and listen to Vera's history."

"I come here every evening so it makes no difference to me." She took a sip of wine and began. "You remember what a good sort Vera was; she never could do too much to make those around her happy. When any of us girls were in trouble she was always ready to help us. For several years before her affair with Arthur, she had lived with a very wealthy Russian, who gave her a great deal of jewelry. How often, when there were big balls here at the casino, she lent me her pearl necklace. Those were pearls—large and round and lustrous. I can tell you, your little Ninette was proud and looked swell when she had those around her slender throat."

She paused a moment, and took from her garter a miniature powder puff and applied it vigorously to her nose. "I always get excited," she added, by way of explanation, "when I talk of Vera."

Stimulated by the wine and by his surround-

ings, Jean reached for the girl's hand and pressed it. "Continue Ninette," he said, "I am sure you looked most sweet and made many conquests."

"No, nonsense!" she said, withdrawing her hand. He laughed. "Go on with your story, do you know where Vera came from?"

"She only took the name of Fleurville; she really was the daughter of Bartin, the cashier in Lacroix's bank. You remember old Bartin and his sad ending?"

"Was she his daughter? I did not know that. Yes, is was very sad about old Bartin and Lacroix, such a pious and methodistic individual too, but as long as bankers insist on inadequately paying men through whose hands thousands of francs pass every day, why they must expect to be robbed."

"Lacroix makes me sick, replied the girl. He is the head of the prohibition movement, yet Maurice tells me that he owns some of the best vineyards in the Canton of Vaud, and although he is a prime mover in the League for the Promotion of Social Purity one of his houses is rented to Madame Adelaide for immoral purposes. I am not much, but I cannot stand for hypocrisy."

"No more can I." replied Jean.

"So you think I am looking well this evening," and she gave him a languishing glance. "How do you like my dress? I know it is not as handsome as Rita's, but Maurice is very generous with her. By the way, speaking of prohibition, I am awfully thirsty. Talking always makes me so."

"Excuse me," said Jean, "I did not notice that your glass was empty." He filled it as he spoke. "But let us hear some more about Vera. Pardon me for interrupting you," he continued, as she opened her mouth to speak, "but what a mean character Lacroix was. You recollect that when some of Bartin's friends pleaded with him not to prosecute the old man, he replied that though his heart bled for his brother in Christ, his duty to the community required him to be severe. So this was Vera's father! I never realized it before. What a plucky woman Madame Bartin was! It was wonderful the way she stood by her husband;" and Jean sighed.

"A woman generally will when a man is in trouble and she is not in love with some one else," replied Ninette. "But I must hurry on with my story; it is getting late. Vera, after much difficulty, secured a position as cashier in a restaurant, but she only received one hundred

francs a month. She was the eldest, and all her family depended on her for their support. Naturally her salary did not suffice, so she took a lover. She was an awfully pretty girl and the lover was easier to find than the position as cashier. The one she chose was very kind to her, but used to keep her up very late at night, and in consequence she would be sleepy the next morning. She began to make mistakes in her accounts—Oh, she was honest, the best and most honest girl that there ever was—and she had to make good out of her own pocket. She soon saw that the two occupations were too much for her, the life was too strenuous and that she would have to choose. So she chose the more profitable one and gave up the restaurant. Come, it is time for me to be looking around a bit! I am not a millionaire."

"Do not worry about that, little girl; I will make it up to you. Here come Maurice and Rita," replied Jean.

"What are you two gossiping about?" Maurice asked, as he and his companion joined them at the table.

"Ninette was telling me about Vera de Villefleurie."

"It was very sad about her, and Arthur Bor-

nier acted most disgracefully, if I may be allowed to say so," said Maurice.

"And how well you acted," said Ninette, admiringly.

"That was nothing," he replied. "A man could not have done less. It made me unhappy to think that she was suffering."

Ninette took up the thread of her story. "After her first lover left her, Vera as I told you, met a Russian, with whom for several years she lived happily. When he died, by some ill chance she fell in with Arthur. We women are fools when once we let our hearts guide us, because, I suppose, our hearts select such very queer roads. He became her *amant de coeur*, but as he had not the means, she was compelled to support herself. I can assure you it is pretty hard at first, when circumstances compel you to take up with anyone to earn an honest living. But you get used to it; I suppose you can get used to anything," she added philosophically. "However that may be, Vera made this sacrifice for Arthur, and though he was and is a gambler and a drunkard, she loved him and kept him supplied with money. He spent a good deal of it on other women, and did not even take the trouble to hide it from her. How that poor

girl suffered! We all told her that she was a fool, but we could do nothing with her."

Here she paused to refresh herself, and Jean thought. "What a great thing a woman's devotion is!"

"Arthur commenced to play heavily," she continued, after sipping her champagne, "and Vera always paid his debts, so gradually her jewelry disappeared. Then she fell sick, and he began to neglect her most shamefully, but the sicker she became and the worse he treated her, apparently the more she loved him. It was sad to see her face light up when by any chance he said a kind word. When all her jewels were sold and she could no longer earn anything, she had grown to look so old and worn, he deserted her altogether. She gave up her apartment, and went to live in a single room, picking up a few francs now and then by waiting around street corners." Jean thought of the poor creature he had seen that evening when driving home from the station, and shuddered.

"This is not a very cheerful subject of conversation," broke in Maurice, beginning to grow restless. "Let us change it."

"That is just like you, Maurice, you never want any one to know about your kind acts," said Rita.

"It is not that, but it makes me blue to think of all the suffering there is in the world. And yet they tell us there is a loving God. If there is one who is responsible for it all, he is worse than Bornier—at least the latter gets some satisfaction out of his misdeeds, but what does such a God get out of his, except the mere pleasure of being evil?"

"I will finish quickly, for they will soon be closing," said Ninette. "Where were we? Oh, yes; Vera had spent everything. Meanwhile Arthur had inherited a comfortable fortune."

"Of which he has already gone through a great deal, if reports are true," interrupted Maurice, "but go on, Ninette."

"Has he? Well, I am glad of it. In her poverty Vera appealed to him, but he refused to help her. Then she fell ill—her last illness. We girls did the best we could for her, but we are not rich. She used to send us to ask him, not to give her money, but simply to come and see her before she died. She never was very strong, and exposure and the life she led had brought on consumption. She knew that she had not long to live, and she wished to kiss him before death took her, but the brute only sent back insulting replies. Then Maurice heard about it."

"Now, now, none of that!" said the latter.

"You keep quiet; I am going to tell Jean how nobly you behaved. Jean, he had her taken to a comfortable apartment and well cared for. She lingered for a few months before she died. Her last words (and I heard them) were, 'Tell Arthur that I forgive him and love him, notwithstanding everything.'" Ninette stopped, and wiped her eyes with a handkerchief. "Poor Vera," she added, "we girls have a hard time of it. But see, they are closing; let us go to my place; we can have some supper."

"Oh, no," said Rita, "let me play hostess this evening."

"Yes, come around to Rita's," joined in Maurice. "We will have a snack before turning in."

Jean had been much exasperated by his wife's injustice and the unreasonableness of her conduct. If on his arrival she had received him with open arms, the chances are that after a more or less prolonged interval he would have resumed his former manner of living, but her coldness had implanted in him a desire to reform, which influenced him as long as there was some hope of a reconciliation. The sarcastic nature of her remarks, and the absolute impossibility of a renewal of their old ties, of which he was now convinced had caused another revolution in his feelings. He was undecided what

course to pursue. This uprooting of old associations, and the uncertainty of a future in which conditions would be so different from those of the past, had aroused in him conflicting emotions which would lead him, he knew not whither.

On the way to Rita's apartment, seated opposite Ninette in the carriage, his knees touching the girl's, the absolute futility of struggling was brought home to him. He was persuaded that no matter how sincere his repentance, how perfect his reformation, his wife's affection could never be regained. Even as he pressed his knee against Ninette's, he was suffering keenly at his wife's defection, and his heart was filled with an unappeasable longing to be with her. His habit of self analysis, however, made him wonder how much of this sorrow, unrest and heart-longing came from a desire for Berthe specifically, or from a general craving for feminine society. On the other hand, although restrained by no conscientious scruples (he had left these behind him long ago), he experienced an unaccountable wish to be faithful to his wife, now that such fidelity would be absolutely unappreciated and serve no useful purpose. He leaned forward and patted Ninette's hand. "Nice little girl," he said, in a troubled voice.

By this time the carriage had reached the door

of the house, in which Maurice had rented and furnished an apartment for Rita. Within certain limits he had given her carte blanche as to the furnishings, and the results were, as might have been expected, excessively fantastic. A narrow vestibule opened into the parlor, which was papered in three shades of red and blue. The furniture was pseudo Louis XIV, upholstered in green, red and gold damask, and against the wall stood a gilt piano—her joy and her pride. The curtains that hung before the windows were of deep red plush, trimmed with broad bands of green, also set off with gold. In a corner against a panel of yellow satin a small replica of the Venus de Milo occupied the summit of a pedestal at whose foot stood a large artificial palm. The walls were covered with a multitude of photographs, and on the mantel stood a clock crowned with an image of reclining Sappho.

But the noticeable feature of the decorative scheme was the great quantity of scarfs, with which everything was draped. In all hues and colors, materials and forms, they covered the backs of chairs, and hung on the frames of pictures and mirrors. This being the first time that Jean had visited her domain, he was loud in his praises, and congratulated her on her exquis-

ite taste. "It is rather pretty," she replied, rearranging the scarf which hung from the corner of the piano, and trying to appear indifferent. "Come, let us go into the dining room and have something to eat and drink."

She led the way. There was nothing extravagant in the arrangement of the room. On the walls, papered in dark brown, hung six pictures of still life which to her were the height of artistic excellence. The furniture of black walnut, in the style of Henry II, was handsomely carved but chaste and appropriate. The bourgeois simplicity and sombreness of this furnishing appealed to her as being in delightful contrast to the brilliant magnificence of her parlor. Before the windows fell heavy blue curtains whose thick folds produced such darkness that, even at noon, she was forced to eat by artificial light.

It is curious that this tendency to darken the places reserved for eating is so persistent. Presumably it originated with the cave men—our ancestors, who, in order to be secure from the ever watchful foe, carried into the inmost recesses of their rocky abodes the prey which they had procured with so much effort, there to be devoured in safety.

A reaction from the shock occasioned by his wife's reception had already set in and during

the supper, the champagne aiding, Jean's attentions to Ninette increased in warmth and demonstrativeness. At first he contented himself with gently pressing her foot under the table, and he felt an actual thrill when this pressure was returned, as if he had at last received a token of affection from a haughty dame whom he had long been pursuing. But soon tiring of this, and growing bolder, he passed his arm around her waist and drew her on his knees. He kissed her and they drank from the same glass. The odor from her warm young body oppressed him, and the soft white neck so close to his lips invited his caresses. The other couple were affected by their actions; the conversation became constrained and finally ceased. Jean pulled himself together. "It is getting late," he said. "I must be going home. Here, Ninette, is a little present for you," and he handed her a hundred franc note.

"Thank you," she said in a disappointed voice, "but I thought"—

"So did I for a moment," he answered; "but then I thought again. To-night I must behave myself. So good-bye. Much obliged, Rita, for your hospitality."

VI.

It may be stated without fear of contradiction that a certain similarity and mutual comprehension link together the upper classes of all countries and that it is in the lower ranks of life that the great diversities of custom and modes of existence appear. The cultivated Turk resembles in habit and dress the American of approximately the same social position, and one can discover but little difference between the ordinary conduct and manner of being of the Russian noble and those of the English gentleman. But between the Turkish and American laborer, between the moujik and the Yorkshire peasant, what a world of difference in thought, prejudice, dress and manners!

Constant travel and intercourse have created the bond that unites the more refined of all nations on the one hand, and immobility and ignorance on the other have fostered the race hatred and the peculiarities that flourish so vigorously amid the masses. In view of these facts it is

not surprising that in large centres the more educated foreigners are scattered generally throughout the indigenous population, whereas the lower orders are segregated according to their several nationalities into communities governed in a great measure by the practices of their native lands.

Geneva forms no exception to this rule. Many are the foreigners of distinction that lend charm and variety to the social gatherings of the aristocracy and various are the colonies that, clinging to their own modes of life, thrive within its hospitable borders.

Prominent amongst these settlements is that of the Russians, most of whom have fixed their abodes in the neighborhood surrounding the Boulevard du Pont d'Arvre. In such numbers have they congregated that they have changed the physiognomy of this quarter, which in its inhabitants, now resembles rather a Russian town than a Swiss city.

Many are the reasons which have influenced them in their choice of the city of Geneva as a place of refuge. The principal of these is that hospitality for which Switzerland is noted, since of these expatriates a large proportion are political refugees. The Confederation does not dis-

criminate but receives on equal terms, the knight of the bomb and dagger, and the patriot, misguided perhaps, whose unselfish motives inspire sympathy. To place under proper surveillance and to unearth the plots of these oft-times dangerous exiles the imperial government here maintains a numerous and well organized secret police.

It must not by any means be supposed however, that this colony is composed exclusively of criminals and malcontents. On the contrary there are included in its members many loyal and peaceable subjects of the Czar, attracted thither by the university and the other opportunities for study and self-improvement that Geneva bestows with so lavish a hand. Especially is the medical faculty thronged with men and women students, who, their course completed, will return to their sordid villages hidden in the heart of the vast empire, there to tend and instruct in the principles of hygiene their ignorant countrymen. The good that they do cannot be overestimated and Russia may well forgive Switzerland the harboring of her anarchists in consideration of the instruction she has so freely offered to many of her sons and daughters.

Students and nihilists, they are all crowded

into the great buildings that have sprung up like mushrooms to accommodate the rapidly increasing population. Vast barrack-like constructions, having no pretentions to architectural beauty, they offend the aesthetic taste of those who pass, by the vulgarity of their pink, blue or yellow facades, and by their freizes decorated with immense sunflowers or lillies.

Nicholas Paulovitch, whose disorderly conduct and whose friendship for Bornier had been commented on by Ninette, was a Nihilist. Of superior intelligence and education he had made a specialty of the study of high explosives and no one better than he knew how to prepare a bomb, suitable either for murder in the street or for the destruction of property. Implicated in the blowing up of the palace of one of the grand dukes, he had managed to escape and take refuge in Geneva, where at the casino he had become acquainted with Arthur. But to go back to our story.

Bornier, as observed by Ninette, had followed Paulovitch and his captors out to the sidewalk. "Dimitri," he called to a young man standing in the crowd, "come close. I want you to do something for me. Do not worry about Paulovitch, I will look after him. You know

Jean des Ormes and Ninette?"

"Yes," replied the Russian, who at his summons had come to his side, "I know them very well."

"Take this," and Arthur handed him a ten franc piece. "Go inside, they are probably still sitting near the bar. Do not lose sight of them for a moment, follow them wherever they go, but be as discreet as possible. You understand?"

"Perfectly," said Dimitri smiling. "I will not lose the trail until I see Monsieur des Ormes safe in his own home."

"That is right. Now be off quick."

When the lad had disappeared through the door, Arthur turned his attention to Paulovitch who was still struggling with his captors. "What are you going to do with him?" he asked.

"Lock him up until he is sober. What do you suppose?" replied one of the plain clothes men.

"What is the use of going to all that trouble? Give him to me, I promise to take him home."

"No. This time in he goes. Very sorry not to be able to oblige you. He needs a lesson."

"His head to-morrow will be lesson enough," insisted Arthur laughing.

After demurring a while, the men consented to the release of their prisoner, and the drunken

Russian whom the cold air was rapidly subduing, was bundled into a cab and accompanied by Arthur was driven off.

When the carriage drew up in front of the tall bright colored apartment house, on the top floor of which was his home, Paulovitch had lapsed into a state of unconsciousness. After much difficulty, his companion and the coachman succeeded in carrying him up the five flights of stairs and propping him against the door post.

"That is a climb and your friend is no light weight," panted the coachman as they halted in the hallway under the skylight.

"You are right and here is something for your trouble," said Arthur, who having rung the bell, waited to be admitted.

"Good evening, Masoushka," he said to the girl who cautiously opened the door. Her face lit up when she recognized who it was that spoke, but immediately clouded over when her eyes through the gloom distinguished the form of Nicholas Paulovitch.

"Good evening, Arthur, where did you find him?" she asked.

"I will tell you when we have put him to bed."

When Nicholas was safely stowed away and the coachman had left, Arthur and Masoushka

seated themselves on the lounge in the little parlor which heavy curtains separated from the bedroom. He put his arm around her waist and drawing her to him, their lips met in a long kiss.

This Masoushka was united to Nicholas Paulovitch by one of those free love arrangements so frequently entered into by Nihilists. It was said of her that when extremely young she together with her brother had been implicated in a conspiracy to assassinate the governor of her province. The brother had been caught and sentenced to Siberia for life and she had escaped only by the merest chance. This, however, was no more than hearsay and the truth concerning her antecedents was unknown. According to some, she was of noble birth, whereas others maintained that she was no more than the daughter of a small shopkeeper.

Whatever diversity of opinion might exist as to her history there could be none as to her peculiar charm. It would, however, be difficult to say in what this charm consisted. Small of stature she was nevertheless exquisitely formed and her freedom from the restraint of corsets and the absence of petticoats under her short skirts, a style of dress affected by the Russian

Nihilists, served to accentuate her grace.

But this alone was not enough to account for her fascination. Nor could it be attributed to her beauty, since her face lacked most of the qualities the possession of which this word implies. Her short, curly brown hair was combed back from her low forehead under which gleamed dark eyes surmounted by black brows which met over the short and slightly upturned nose. Her mouth was large with full red lips disclosing when she smiled a set of superb teeth.

No, it was in her expression that lay her weird attraction, at least so Arthur thought as when releasing herself, she timidly glanced up at him. In her eyes he could read the sadness and the longings of an oppressed people, and in her smile, that hopeless misery, so hopeless that in its intensity it becomes a bitter joy.

By that smile was touched the same chord of mystical sorrow that is set vibrating by the Russian folk-songs, which, recalling the clank of the chain and the crack of the whip, are ennobled by the ardent faith they express in the destiny of the great white empire. The self-effacement, the absolute sacrifice of self, the gentle pride that lie in perfect humility; all this and more, could a seeing eye read in her young face.

As he looked down on her head resting on his shoulder everything that was good in Arthur was aroused. "My Masoushka, my poor Masoushka," he said, slipping to his knees.

"Get up, Arthur mine, sit by me and let us talk. Where did you find Nicholas?"

"What is the use of talking of that brute?" he replied, as a drunken snore came from behind the curtain. "But if you must know, he was arrested for creating a disturbance at the casino. I begged him off and brought him home."

"How good you are to do this," she said earnestly.

"Good! Not at all. I brought him home because I wanted to see you. Why do you not give him up—I will care for you?"

"And my duty to Russia, to my poor people, what about them?"

"But surely you owe something to yourself?"

"How can I better pay this debt than by being true to my higher self?"

"But think of me, consider our love. Does not this tie establish a duty?"

"We will see," replied the girl, "but my duty to Russia must take precedence over everything."

Again he drew her lithe young form to his

breast. "Love is greater than all else," he whispered as he showered passionate kisses on her yielding lips. "He is king, believe me, Masoushka."

She resisted. "Spare me Arthur, do not make me hate myself?"

"Hate yourself because you would no longer sacrifice the real duty which you owe your love, to a quixotic sense of what you owe to a brute and to a mystical conception? No, if you persist in your mad intention it will rather be for what you have not done, that some day you will hate yourself, than for what you have done."

"But remember, dearest, up to now I have known no other passion than love of country. I did not love Nicholas. I felt that he was struggling for freedom and for right. I admired him for what seemed to me his bravery, and I gave myself to him from a sense of comradeship and from a feeling of the duty incumbent on me of encouraging by all means in my power, the workers for the cause."

"Now, sweetheart, you have learnt what love is. I love you. God, how I love you. You gave yourself for love of country, now give yourself for love of love."

He clasped her close to him, he rained his fiery

kisses on her hair, on her eyes, and with uncertain hands he stroked the swelling linen of her bodice. She struggled, but he held her fast. He kissed her ears and glued his lips to hers. Then the forces of her passionate nature, which up to now had found expression in a mistaken and barren love of country, burst forth in all their fury. In a tumultuous flood they swept over her, brushing every barrier aside like driftwood.

Her eyes closed, and with fury she replied to his violent caresses, raining delirious kisses on his lips. She grasped him in her strong young arms and her convulsive effort made him pant for breath. At last exhausted, she released him and lay back expressionless in his embrace. With one soft hand she caressed his knee, and the fingers of the other she passed gently through his hair.

As thus motionless she rested, her bosom rising and falling with her short and rapid breathing, her eyes opened and gazed into his. She sighed. Once more her lids dropped and again he felt her firm embrace as she sought his lips with hers. "You are cruel," she murmured, "leave me," but ever her arms pressed him closer to her heart.

VII.

THE stars were shining brightly, for the weather had cleared during the night, when Jean opening the front door, quietly made his way to his room, and hastily undressing sought his bed.

At ten o'clock, the next morning he was awakened by a gentle knocking. "Come in," he called sleepily, and the next instant, with a rush, his children projected themselves on his bed smothering him in kisses.

"Oh, Father, Father," they cried, "we are so glad to have you back again. You are going to stay with us are you not?"

"I cannot tell you, children."

The boy Aimé, his face darkened by the sadness which comes so quickly to children, but which as quickly passes away, let himself slip off the bed onto the floor, and crossing his rough, bare legs, looked up at his father. "Father you will stay a little while with Aimé, will you not?"

"No, baby, I am afraid that I cannot," he replied sadly, as he thought what it would mean to

him to be robbed of his children. Of the little one above all, who would grow up with scarcely a recollection of his father, for babies forget so soon, or would be taught to dislike him.

"Oh, a little while Father," Aimé pleaded as tears came into his upturned blue eyes.

"Father, why must you go?" asked Marthe, "you ought not to be always leaving us. Do you not love us and Mother any more and what makes Mother so sad? She does not seem to care to have us around. She is always sending us away."

"Of course, I love you, children, and you may be sure that your mother does, but I cannot explain this to you now. Some day you will know. Run along now," he added, as the butler brought in his coffee, "this is Sunday, and it is time for you to be going to church. I am going later, for I wish to have a talk with Monsieur le Curé."

"Telephone the riding-school," he added, turning to the butler, "to send my horse around after lunch. I am going to ride over to Saint Leger."

It seemed curious to him to be in his own house, and to be directing things as if his stay were to be permanent. A few weeks later, he

well knew, he would give anything for his children's society, and now he was sending them away. But life must go on and even a man condemned to die, spends the greater part of his last few minutes dressing himself.

When his toilet was completed he entered the library where he found Berthe already seated in her armchair. Her back was turned to the window and the light which filtered through the lace curtains was subdued by the heavy draperies. She was well aware that thus seated, a woman no longer in her first youth, appears to the best advantage, and with feminine cruelty she hoped, by increasing her value from a physical standpoint, to render harder the blow she had decided to deliver.

She had dressed herself for the occasion in a cerise colored morning gown, trimmed with gray green velvet, and made of a soft clinging material. Although the effect was loose, the gown was skillfully cut, so as to show her youthful figure to the best advantage. She had placed herself slightly sideways in the chair, thus tightening her dress and showing in its purity the lines of her graceful form.

At the sound of his step, she glanced up from

her embroidery, but said nothing more than, "Good morning, Jean, I hope that you slept well."

"Very well, I thank you and I hope you did the same," he replied, as he seated himself opposite to her and lighting a cigarette appeared to be wrapt in thought.

The silence had become irksome, when laying her work on her knees, she said, "I think, Jean, that we have had enough of this."

"I think so, too. By the way did your occult friend with the long hair stay very late? You look rather tired and used up."

"No, he did not. And I do not see how my looks concern you. But this is quite aside from the question. As I said before, I am tired of this, and I have decided to ask for my divorce."

"This seems to me rather an extreme measure to take under the circumstances," he replied. "There are the children to be considered. What will they think of it, what will Marthe say to such a measure? You know she has been brought up to think divorce an invention of the evil one."

"She would have to get used to it," and a vicious look came into her face. "I certainly cannot let my life be ruined by what a child might

say or think."

"Even if she is your own child, and that rightly or wrongly, your action will upset all her notions of morality?"

"I cannot help it. After all it will be your fault. You ought to have thought of the probable consequences of your sin."

"I do not think that such a line of reasoning would exculpate you before God. Nor that because it may be possible to excuse or palliate your act, that it would in any way change the deplorable results on your—or rather our—daughter, which after all should be the issue with a true mother. If you can serve as a screen between your children and the results of my sins, as you term them, is it not your duty to do so?"

"I have made up my mind so there is no use of discussing it any more. I want you to-morrow afternoon to explain the matter to Maître Rapagon and engage him as my lawyer."

"But I thought of engaging him for myself. He has always been my counsel."

"I think that very mean of you, you always were selfish."

"Berthe, I think that you must be crazy. You have been going out a great deal. In my absence you have been surrounded by a lot of

flatterers who have turned your head."

"I see that you are as polite as ever. Oh!" she continued after a moment's pause, "I had quite forgotten; Juliette de Tourville has asked us to dinner this evening. She learned last night that you had returned. Afterwards we are to take supper at the Restaurant des Quais with the Rondins. Shall we accept?"

"Why not? By the way, I saw Monsieur de Muriel at the club last night. I am going to ride out to see them this afternoon."

"Are you?" she replied as she went to the telephone and called up Madame de Tourville. "Is this you, Juliette? I am Berthe—Berthe des Ormes. Jean and I will come with pleasure. Yes, he is very well. I will tell him. Good-bye until this evening at eight o'clock." She rang off and resumed her embroidery.

"Juliette sends you her best regards and hopes that you enjoyed yourself. But, Jean, I think it very unkind of you to refuse to help me. You have tormented me enough. Do as I wish, and I will tell everyone how nice you were and how you tried to make up for the past by facilitating matters for me."

"Berthe, I do not know what has gotten into you. Again I say you must be crazy."

"Nothing has gotten into me but I wish to have done with it all. You have tormented me enough. I wish to be free. Your very presence here is an insult."

"You certainly are not complimentary. If my presence is disagreeable to you, I will leave and not return until you send for me."

"Leave me? I know your tricks. You want to keep me here to torture me. You will run all over the world and return now and then to inspect your victim. You want to keep me tied so as to misuse me. No, I will not have it. I will not have it!"

"Now, Berthe, calm yourself, if you prefer I will stay in Geneva."

"Yes, stay here to abuse me, to maltreat me. Since we have been married you have never done but one nice thing for me."

"May I ask what that one nice thing was?"

"When," replied Berthe, a tear in her voice, "you brought me that little puppy dog, and he is dead now."

"Do not talk nonsense, my dear."

"I suppose that legally I am 'your dear,' but I assure you that I am not otherwise."

"Well probably it will not be for long," he said, losing his temper.

"Oh, to be free," she exclaimed. "When I look back at all these years of neglect, my youth gone—and you never loved me, you know you never did, you would have acted very differently if you had. And now you want to keep me tied to you so as to torture me at your leisure."

The sound of a child's steps was heard and Aimé came into the room. He stood between his parents undecided what to do, for even baby as he was he saw that something was wrong. Then noticing the frown on his mother's brow, he trotted over to her side and patted her cheek with his dimpled hand. "Mother is scolding," he said, "be nice, mother, be nice."

With the obstinancy characteristic of such natures, she pushed away the curly head which had buried itself in her lap. She advanced her chin and her expression became hard and relentless. Sobbing bitterly and throwing a pitiful look at his father, the child left the room. He had thus learned from her who had brought him into the world how harsh and unforgiving this same world could be.

"How could you, how could you, Berthe!" cried Jean. "Have you a mother's heart, are you even a woman, that you can act this way? Call him back. I have wronged you, I know, but forgive

me. Call him back. Let us seal our reconciliation, by together wiping away his tears."

He besought her in vain. It seemed as if no pleading could soften that heart. It must be admitted that he had had his part in hardening it, but nothing that he could have done would have rendered it insensible to her baby's tears. To accomplish this, more had been required than his neglect and infidelity; a finishing process which, even had he so desired, he could not have completed.

Another influence had entered into her life, a sentiment which had nothing in common with family affection, but was rather its antithesis. This had perfected the work her husband had begun, neither alone could have accomplished it.

"For God's sake, stop tormenting me," she cried, "you are not a gentleman, you will not play the game. Let me go. I do not love you. I forgive you, but I hate you. After all these years of neglect you will not even try to make up for it by giving me my freedom."

"But, Berthe, I love you, I want to keep my family together. Remember the prodigal son, did not his father forgive him?"

"Yes, but unfortunately I am not your father. Oh, I have had enough of it," she cried passion-

ately, "enough of it I tell you. All the horrible things you have done to me since our marriage. I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it. You must give me my freedom."

"Berthe, can you not see, do you not see that you are asking too much? The sacrifice is too great. You ask me to voluntarily give up my wife, my children, my home. You have lost your senses. Moreover you wish me to provide you with the weapons with which you design to accomplish my destruction. It cannot be, you cannot mean it. On my knees I beg of you to give up this horrible idea."

"I cannot give it up. I have forgiven you so many times. You have exhausted my patience. I am worn out."

"How oft shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him? Until seven times? What did our Lord answer?"

"But you do not really want to be forgiven. It is only your pride that suffers, not your heart. I am sure that you have been through similar scenes not once, but often, with your different mistresses."

"Berthe, you are out of your head."

"No I am not. When Juliette de Tourville gave you your *congé* what did you say? I am

pursuaded that you were quite as dramatic."

"Juliette de Tourville with whom we are dining to-night? Juliette, my mistress! Berthe you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Yes, Juliette de Tourville. Of course, she was your mistress. It is common talk. Ah, I have touched you there."

"Although I deny absolutely your scandalous remark, I cannot help but think it curious that you should dine with her, and accept her hospitality if you believe this piece of malicious gossip."

"I do not believe. I know. I know the number and the street of the apartment where you used to meet. But what of it? She is only one amongst many. I really cannot turn myself into a recluse?"

"Berthe this is quite untrue, as you yourself well know, and is quite beside the question."

"Although I do not consider it beside the question, still for a moment I will drop it. But you never loved me. You once even went so far as to admit this to me."

"You call yourself a Christian, or you used to. Did not Peter deny his Master not once but three times, and did He not forgive him, and make of him the solid rock on which he built His church?"

Berthe began to sob. Jean threw himself on his knees and buried his face in her lap, as their baby boy had done. "Poor Jean," she moaned, "you do feel badly and I cannot help you. You are so sad. We are both in such deep distress, and we cannot comfort one another as we always used to. I need comforting too, believe me Jean, I pity you and I pity myself. Poor boy," and she passed her hand through his hair.

There is no woman who is not flattered at seeing a man at her feet, even if she feels that she has been wronged, even if the suppliant has betrayed her most sacred trust. She cannot but be moved at his distress, and even though she has no intention of forgiving or of yielding to his prayer, yet is she always influenced by a longing to protect, by a desire to comfort. In one word the maternal instinct is awakened.

Berthe was not of stone and when she saw his deep trouble all the better nature in her struggled for mastery. But the struggle was a brief one and the revulsion soon came. "Leave me," she cried, putting him from her with all her strength. "It is not right, do not touch me," and a shudder ran through her frame.

He arose from his knees and the look of sorrow was replaced by one of anger. "Berthe,"

he cried furiously, "you are in love with someone else, is it Arthur Bornier, that disreputable drunkard? Tell me, I demand an answer. Everyone in town is talking about you two, even the *cocottes* at the casino."

"You are in the highest sense of the word a gentleman, are you not?" she said contemptuously. "So you have been discussing your wife, the mother of your children, with common prostitutes have you? Get away, you make me despise you."

"You know that what you say is not true. Someone at the casino mentioned casually that you had been seen at the theatre with that man. I, of course, immediately changed the subject. I do not doubt that you have discussed me with that protégé of the demi-monde, but do not imagine that I discuss you with those who furnish him with funds."

"You need not try to explain," she said witheringly, "nor attempt to defend yourself by slandering others."

"You have not answered me yet. Do you love this Bornier?"

"Do not insult me," she cried wildly, "and if I do I am free. I have been free to love whom I pleased ever since you left me. You are nothing

to me, leave me. I hate you, you make me shudder."

"Madame, you had better be careful, you know that in such matters I do not trifle," he said sternly. "But I will not believe it, my Berthe loving someone else. It cannot be so. It cannot be so. Tell me that it is not true."

"I will not answer you. I will not, I am free. You have no longer any rights. Leave me I am worn out, weary, oh, so weary of it all. I want peace. I need peace and tranquility."

"If you will not answer me I shall know that my suspicions are right and will take such measures as may be necessary."

"What measures," she asked anxiously. "What measures will you take?"

"I was sure of it, the fact that you do love that cad. You remember how often I have said, and you have agreed with me, that a woman never wishes a divorce unless she is in love with another man."

"We were mistaken. It is not so, but even if it were I am free to love wherever I please."

"In the eyes of the law and of God you are still my wife and you are an adulteress at heart. 'Whosoever looketh on a woman with unclean eyes and lusteth after her hath committed adul-

tery with her already in his heart.' If this is true of a man, how much more true is it of a woman."

"You are not chic," she answered him, "you are not playing the game. I think that after all these years of misery you might try to atone by joining with me in asking for the divorce. It would make it so much easier."

"But why should I do this? Why should I work towards my own destruction? Our ties are nothing, then? You yourself said that they were too sacred to be easily broken. You are not asking to sever bonds but a few months old nor a companionship founded only on love. Love as you have seen passes as quickly as it comes. It was not intended by nature that it should endure. But you are about to destroy the only thing of any value in this world: a home, a union of many years standing, based on mutual comprehension and strengthened by common interests. Are the joys we have shared nothing? Are the sorrows we have passed through hand in hand, nothing? Do you not know that nothing so thoroughly molds two beings into one as the sorrows which they have suffered together? Is all this nothing?"

"Nothing! nothing! You never loved me

You were always restless when I kissed you. You never responded to one of my caresses unless it was with an ulterior motive. Selfish, horrible, loathsome object that you are."

"Admitting all this to be true, is there no such thing as forgiveness?"

"Not in your case. Yes, I do forgive you, I wish you no evil. Go away, leave me alone—that is all I desire. I hope that you will prosper. I do forgive you as I hope to be forgiven."

"Berthe, do not blaspheme."

"If you will not help me," she went on disregarding his last remark, "I will get the divorce anyway. Oh, I have grounds enough. If you contest it, what a scandal it will make. The disgrace that will fall on our innocent children's heads."

"You would not do that, I am sure."

"I will do anything to be free from you. To feel this terrible burden lifted from my shoulders, to feel myself clean and free."

"And what would you do with your freedom? If you wish I will consent to a separation, will not that be enough?"

"What I will do with my freedom is no concern of yours and a separation will not be sufficient. You left me alone. You did not think of

my reputation. What did you care? I could almost believe that you tried to force me to be bad so that you could feel freer to go your own way."

"It seems to me that a woman of your age might be trusted to live alone for a few months without compromising herself."

"There you are again insulting me. After all these years of misery. I can bear it no more. I will be free. But tell me Jean, where did you go last night?"

"I went to the club and afterwards to the casino with Maurice. I did not find your long-haired fakir very entertaining."

"Always the same thing—neglect. I have sat up night after night listening for the sound of your footsteps."

"Berthe, once more I ask your forgiveness;" he arose from his chair as he spoke. "Pardon me if I have been violent. It is only because I love you and feel so very badly. If I did not would I care? Forgive me for our children's sake. Let us begin life again. We are still young enough to do so. I swear that you will never regret it. Come Berthe."

But the better feelings by which for one moment she had seemed to be influenced had

been swept away. She scarcely heard him. He was speaking to deaf ears and to a closed heart.

"Do not torment me any more," she answered in a weary voice. "If you do not help me I will get the divorce anyway. It will make a horrible scandal, that will be the only result and I do not see the use of it; however, you know your own affairs best."

He tried one more appeal. Once more he essayed to awaken that sleeping conscience, to appeal to the religious feelings that he knew must be lying dormant and not dead within her. Worldliness, vanity, occultism and a new passion had conspired to crush her higher nature, but he hoped to find something there which he could awaken from its sleep.

"Berthe, look at the Man of Sorrows," and he pointed to a silver crucifix hanging on the wall. "He suffered for and through us as you have suffered for and through me. Yet He forgave. Did not your religion teach you that divorce was wrong, that it was absolutely opposed to God's law? Has it no more influence over you?

"What is this religion of which you speak?" she cried. "We women have long enough been bound by its chains. How many men believe? The churches are filled with women and women

only. 'Religion is a good thing' you say, 'for our wives. It keeps them in the path in which they should walk. The lower classes it renders submissive,' and so you encourage the church. Religion forbids us, does it, to free ourselves from the man who introduces impurity into his home?—When every fibre of our finer nature is hourly outraged by a man's grossness we are not to rebel? No—divorce is our weapon. By it we will force you men to reach a higher plane. The priests have bound us too long already. But enough!—enough! Look at my hair. It is turning white,"—she raised her hand to her head. "I have you to thank for it. Think how often you have insulted me."

"In what way?"

"Oh, often. You have not even taken the trouble to hide your love affairs from me. When I asked you, you should not have confessed. You should have lied about them. They would have been good lies."

"You know that I detest untruth," he said.

"Yet you have often lied to me and deceived me too."

"Sometimes one is forced to lie. You would not have me betray sacred confidences, nor announce to you when I go out 'Madame, if I am

late for dinner this evening do not worry nor wait for me. I intend to deceive you this afternoon with Madame Q., and may be delayed longer than I expect—one can never tell.' You would not ask this, would you?"

"I do not know and I do not care. To-morrow I want you to see Maître Rapagon and retain him for me."

"And if I refuse? If I refuse to have anything to do with the matter?"

She leaned towards him and in an intense voice replied. "Then I shall cite Juliette de Tourville as co-respondent."

"You would not be capable of such an act," he cried.

"I will do anything as I said before to be free from you. So take your choice. Agree. Put in a cross suit, say what you please about me—the laws are lax—say that I am extravagant—anything you wish—or," and here she paused, "I swear to you that Juliette de Tourville shall be cited as co-respondent."

"This is nonsense."

"Is it? I have proofs of what I advance."

He bowed. "Madame I do not believe that there will be any necessity for you to produce your so-called proofs. But excuse me, it is late,

and with your permission I will go to Mass."

He left the room and taking up his hat and cane in the hall passed out into the street. As he turned the corner he met Maurice. "Why, Jean," said the latter, "you look very much upset. What is the matter?"

"I have just had an explanation with Berthe. She has her mind fixed on a divorce. She has even threatened, and I trust you will keep silence, to cite a lady we both know as co-respondent. Her behavior has made me more pursuaded than ever that there is someone else."

"You may be right," replied his friend. "I do not say that you are not. But do not lose your head. A man who believes himself in love thinks the whole world his rival. He cannot realize (I am not alluding in any way to Berthe) that the object of his affections is but a woman, who probably has hunted after twenty others before catching him, and that all the other twenty rush to cover when the fair one approaches. As I said there is nothing personal, but a man in your situation always exaggerates."

"I understand you, but I must hurry. I am late as it is for church. Drop in to lunch if you care to."

Left alone Berthe drew from her bosom a locket suspended on a fine platinum chain. She opened it and was gazing at the portrait it contained, when the bell rang and the original, Arthur Bornier, was ushered in. He dropped on one knee and kissed her hand. "I live once more, fair lady, now that I am in your presence."

"Arthur," she replied, "I have just had an explanation with Jean and have told him that I intended insisting on the divorce."

"What did he say and how did he take it?" queried the young man as he rose from his kneeling posture.

"He was very much broken up. I could not help feeling sorry for him, much as he has wronged me," she answered.

"Of course he is to be pitied at losing such a treasure as you. Who would not weep and tear his hair at such a thought? But do not pity him. I have news to tell you. First let me ask you, did he agree to join in asking for the divorce? You know that according to our laws this greatly simplifies matters."

"He left before we had definitely decided, but from what he said when I played my trump card, and told him that I would cite Juliette as

co-respondent if he did not, I rather think that he will consent. I hope that you really have the proofs that you claim to have."

"Never you fear, sweetheart, I have them. What did he say when you threatened him?"

"'Madame (and these are his exact words as close as I can remember them) I do not believe that there will be any necessity of producing your so-called proofs.'"

"H'm. That is vague. Did he say anything about me, or rather about us?" and an unpleasant smile turned the corners of his mouth.

"Yes he did. He said everything about you that he could. He called you a drunkard and many other unpleasant names, but of course I did not believe what he said."

"Of course not," replied the other reflectively, "Of course not. But tell me, does he suspect that you return my love?"

"He does and he does not. It is hard to say. But what is your news?"

"Only this, Jean and Maurice were at the casino together in company with Rita and Ninette. I must explain to you that Rita is Maurice's mistress and Ninette is a great friend of hers. After the performance the four left in a carriage. I had them followed. First they

went to Rita's, where I suppose they had supper. Then—and this is the important point—Jean and Ninette left together and on foot went to the latter's house which is only a few steps away. He did not leave until early this morning."

Arthur awaited with interest the effect of his lie.

"And after that he dared to come home and talk to me as he did, to swear that he loved me. Oh the scoundrel! I am glad you told me. It kills all pity in my heart. It gives me strength to proceed. But tell me, dearest, who and what is that Boula Omayat? He nearly frightened me to death last night. He is diabolical."

"What did he do? Did he frighten my dear girl. I will tell him he must not do it again. And I was not here to protect you!" He stepped forward and tried to take her in his arms, but although infatuated with him and despite her many faults, Berthe was very sensitive on the question of her own physical purity. She pushed him from her. "No, Arthur, this would be unworthy of us, let us respect one another."

"You are right, dearest, forgive me. My love for you made me forget myself," but to himself he thought "the foolish prude!"

"Thank you, Arthur dearest, I am sure you feel about it as I do."

"My spotless one, of course I do. You must forgive me that the intoxication of your presence, that the sight of so much beauty carried me away. I shall never forgive myself, even if you do, for having offended you. But pardon, dearest."

Of course she pardoned. Too much ardor on the part of a man who woos her, is not a very serious crime in the eyes of a woman, especially if she be past thirty, so she smiled on him, and he thought to himself "what fools these women are!"

"What are you thinking of, Arthur?"

"I am thinking how beautiful and sweet you are. How brave, to have stood what you have for all these years: Jean's neglect, his infidelities without number. How I love you for your purity and goodness."

"I believe in your love, Arthur, yet after my sad experience I wonder that I should ever trust a man again."

"You hurt me, darling, speaking this way. You seem to doubt the depth and sincerity of my love."

"Doubt you, Arthur, never! I long so," she

continued, "to be loved, to be everything to someone, to have someone to care for me. We women are weak and we live on affection as the plant does on sunshine. We need it and without it we wither and perish. Am I so very withered?"

"Withered. Why angel you are the most beautiful creature in the universe. God was in a good humor when he made you and sent you to lighten up this dark world and to be my joy."

"But I am getting old. Look!" And she showed the same white lock to him as to her husband. But with what a different gesture. The former had been one of anger, spite and fury at the thought of his neglect and her lost youth. The second was one of deprecation.

"Old! What nonsense you are talking. When you are free, even the recollection of the cruelty which has turned those golden locks to silver, shall be obliterated. My love shall be like the philosopher's stone and the less precious metal shall at its touch be restored to its pristine glory."

"Thank you, Arthur, I believe you," she said.

With this we shall leave them for a time and follow Jean to church.

VIII.

Not far from the Cathedral of St. Peter's was the entrance to a covered passage way which pierced diagonally a block of old buildings surrounded by a labyrinth of alleys and small streets. This dark and gloomy path, which had been the scene of more than one murder, terminated in a flight of stairs descending into a small paved court, from which another passage at right angles to the first led to the "Street of the Beautiful Girls," so called because in the middle ages it had been the principal thoroughfare of the quarter reserved to the use of the impure ones of the epoch.

The old houses, which had witnessed the career of many a fair girl and alas her death as well, which had sheltered so much pleasure and such mad revels, which had harkened to so many sobs of joy and of sorrow too, still looked down with their solemn faces. Although the quarter had been for more than a century devoted to other uses, there still lingered about it an in-

describable atmosphere of love. Was it really so or was it only that the imagination was excited by the name, the "Street of the Beautiful Girls," a name so full of amorous suggestion?

One could almost hear now and again a faint sigh of love wafted from a low postern door. Such a sigh as would escape from the lips of some poor ghost vainly awaiting a gallant whose body had long since returned to dust and whose spirit had forgotten the way to the "Street of the Beautiful Girls."

Of all the pleasure, the hearty thoughtless enjoyment of youth, the calculating luxury of old age, nothing remained except this faint sigh. Their very memory had long since been obliterated, even the memory of the heartbreaks. But despite the flight of years and the oblivion the stones themselves exhaled a special atmosphere and the air was laden with an indescribable something which recalled the former denizens of the locality.

This street ended in a fairly large place or square paved with round cobble stones between which the grass was growing. In the centre and shaded by a tall spreading elm, was a fountain of yellowish stone, where the women of the neighborhood procured their water and where the

horses slaked their thirst. The north side of this sleepy square was occupied by the Church of St. Paul, whose square tower with its windowed belfrey lent an air of distinction to the quarter which it would otherwise have lacked.

The remaining sides were flanked by antique buildings, whose basements were devoted to the shops of petty tradesmen or to workingmen's cafés. Here and there from the walls projected swinging signs, decorated with a key, a bunch of grapes or with some other pictorial symbol of the nature of the commerce carried on within.

While in no sense an important monument the Church of St. Paul was nevertheless an interesting example of the Romanesque style. Erected by one of the old Bishops who had ruled in Geneva long before Farel and Calvin had, by hanging, confiscation and exile, converted the inhabitants to a purer conception of the faith of the loving Christ, it had at the time of the Reformation been transformed into a Protestant temple. The rich stained glass, of that beautiful blue which modern art in vain attempts to reproduce, which softens the light to that religious dimness conducive to the reveries of devotion, had been shattered. Calvin, the loving, and Agrippa d'Aubigné, the pure, could not suf-

fer the idolatrous nature of the pictured scenes. Christ suffering on the cross and the Virgin gazing tenderly at the Child while the Magi worshipped were not to be endured.

The beautiful altar with its wealth of carving and gilt had been overthrown and the consecrated Host had been cast to the dogs with the jeer; "Let us see whether God will take care of Himself." But God had not done so. He had remained as silent as when hanging on the cross He looked down pityingly on those who cried: "He hath saved others but Himself He cannot save. If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross and we will believe."

The centuries sped by, the stern belief of the first reformers faded until it became so weak that religious toleration became possible. On a certain day in one of the first years of the Nineteenth Century the notes of the "Ave" once more echoed through those ancient arches and again the tinkling of the silver bell invited the faithful to bow their knees before the God who again had deigned to take possession of His sanctuary. Under the vaulted roof of the old church floated the perfume of incense, a perfume which not even three centuries had dispelled, so impregnated with it had become the

stone. Although the interior was simple and plain glass replaced the ancient glory of the windows a new altar had been erected and God was once more at home.

It was to this church that Jean made his way through the passage and the street of the "Beautiful Girls." As has been seen, tired by his journey and his experiences of the night before, he had overslept himself. His interview with his wife had been a further source of delay. In consequence of these hindrances it was very late when he entered the sacred edifice and took his accustomed seat, the priest being already in the midst of the offertory.

As Geneva is essentially a Protestant city the congregation in whose midst he worshiped consisted principally of foreigners. In it were the wealthiest members of the French colony.

As a result of the latter fact the services were conducted with great impressiveness and the music was the finest in the city. With a hasty glance to see who of his acquaintances were present Jean knelt and became absorbed in his devotions.

He really believed and he really prayed and there was nothing hypocritical in his action. Faith and a sinful life are perfectly consistent.

Although Martin Luther exaggerated when he advised his followers to sin in order that they might thus show forth to the world their confidence in the love of God, there is much truth in a certain remark of Madame de Pompadour. In reply to the surprise expressed by a courtier that she, the King's mistress, should be such a regular attendant at mass, the famous beauty exclaimed, "Because I commit one sin is that a reason why I should commit two?"

Jean having to a very marked degree the habit of self-analysis, it was by such a train of reasoning that he explained to himself his seeming inconsistency. He had no immediate intention of changing his manner and mode of life, then why did he pray, what good did his praying do? Did not Christ commend the publican who beat upon his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," although it is not recored of the latter that he made any resolution to amend his ways?

The music, the incense, the lights and the marvelous poetry of the ceremony appealed to the mystical and sensuous side of his nature, softening his grief and filling him with renewed hope and courage. When the services were finished he made his way toward the door leading

from the chancel to the vestry room.

The sacristan, who opened at his knock, greeted him with a smile of pleased surprise. He was an obsequious individual whose like is to be found only in the employ of ecclesiastics and in the mysterious world of the sacristy. Of uncertain age (whether twenty-five or sixty—it was impossible to say) his face and head were hairless, his skin shining and yellow like wax. Twinkling eyes peered out from beneath drooping lids with a sly and not altogether unpleasant expression and the mobile lips concealed a set of strong brown teeth. His form, clothed in a musty black coat, reeking of incense and spotted from the votive tapers he tended before the statue of St. Anthony, was doubled as by a perpetual bow. Held close to his chest his hands which he was continually rubbing together were smooth and long, the fingernails coarse and rimmed with black.

"Monsieur le Curé, here is Monsieur des Ormes," he announced bending still lower in a ceremonious salute as he stepped backwards to make way for the new comer. Nothing had been changed since the last time Jean had entered this room, not even since the first time years ago. The familiar smell of incense and of

wax tapers still lingered and in the corner the water was still dropping from the damaged faucet beneath which the celebrant washed his hands. The old Curé, his back turned towards the door, had paused a moment in the occupation of folding his vestments to refresh himself with a pinch of snuff. At the sacristan's announcement he faced about and with outstretched arms waddled towards our friend.

The Abbé Moulin, such was the name of the priest entrusted by the Bishop with the important parish of St. Paul, was jolly, quick tempered and fat. He possessed a red clean shaven face, small bright eyes, the back of his bullet head was broad and flat. His short stature and tremendous girth, which latter pecularity was responsible for the raising of the front of his cassock a few inches from the floor, were the other salient features of his appearance.

"Monsieur des Ormes," he exclaimed, "this is indeed a glad surprise."

"I am delighted to see you again, Monsieur le Curé. You are the first person on whom I have called and your gout, is it better?"

"I have occasional twinges of it, just enough to keep me careful. Now tell me how you have been, and how is Madame des Ormes. It is a

long while since I have seen her. She has scarcely been to church since you left."

"She is very well thank you. If you have a moment to spare I should like to have a short conversation with you. I am afraid that my relations with her are very much strained."

"I am not surprised, my poor boy, what could you expect? You have left her alone so much."

"Undoubtedly it is my fault, but that does not make it any easier to bear."

"Surely not. But come over to the Cure. We can talk the matter over while I drink my coffee. It is very trying when one reaches my age to say the last mass. My Vicar was sick this morning and I had to take his place. Here it is past twelve and I have as yet had nothing to eat." So saying, he took up his hat and opened the door into the street. "After you, my friend."

The Curé occupied an apartment in a quaint old house on an alley neighboring the church. In days gone by it had probably served for purposes less holy than the sheltering of a worthy ecclesiastic. The hollows in the steps of the circular flight of stone stairs up which they mounted had been worn by lighter and more joyous steps than his.

Brighter eyes had peered through the trap in

the door arranged for the inspection of visitors, than those of his old housekeeper who, having made sure of their identity, opened to her master's ring. The aged Savoyard peasant with her tight-fitting black net cap, over which she placed her hat when she had occasion to go out, had lost none of the caution of her kind and was prepared to take no risk of admitting thieves. She greeted Jean with a grin of pleasure that distorted her toothless mouth.

"Marie, my coffee in the parlor," ordered the Abbé, as he ushered Jean into that room, where visitors of importance were received.

Here also nothing had been changed, except perhaps that the light buff paper with which the walls were covered had grown more faded and dim, and the carpetless board floor a trifle more rough from Marie's vigorous scrubbing.

The benign countenance of Pius X still looked down from between the windows and smiled at the framed portrait of the Curé's mother on the opposite panel. A kindly old peasant woman whose face was lit up by a look of pride as if she were constantly recalling to herself the dignity to which her son had risen—the highest dignity in her eyes attainable by a mortal.

On either side of the Spanish crucifix which

hung over the mantel, the Christ red and blue from blood and bruises, horrible in His distorted agony, stood statues of St. Joseph and of the Immaculate Conception in tinted plaster. Their lack of character had always appealed to Jean as being in such excellent keeping with the general aspect of the room. At the priest's indication he took his seat on the walnut sofa upholstered in purple cloth, turning yellow at the seams and around the buttons with which it was tufted.

His host seated at the table in the centre of the room, waited for his factotum to bring in his coffee. In front of him stood a large china lamp with paper shade, a copy of the *Correspondant,* and a work on the miracles of Lourdes. When he had appeased his appetite with numerous pieces of bread steeped in the steaming mixture, he turned to his guest.

"Tell me now, Monsieur Jean, what the difficulty is." Jean did not reply, but rising from his seat walked over to the window and looked down to the street. The tears came to his eyes as he pressed his burning forehead against the cool glass.

"Come, courage, tell me what is wrong. Madame des Ormes is angry with you, is she not?

Why do you not go home and tell her that you are sorry? Do not let your pride stand in your way."

"My pride," he answered. "There is no question of pride. If you could have heard me talk to her you would not have thought that there was any question of pride."

"But what could you have done, my poor boy? Is it your absence that has angered her?"

"You know, Father, as well as I do. I have confessed to you often enough."

"Alas, yes, I know. But heretofore she has always forgiven you. Tell her this time that you will absolutely change your manner of life; that you are older and more settled."

"I have appealed to her in every way. I have asked her for the children's sake to give up this idea of divorce. But all is in vain."

"Of divorce!," said the priest in a startled tone. "Surely your wife knows that as a Catholic this is impossible."

"Did not you yourself say that she had not been seen at church for a long while?"

"Yes, it is at least eight months since she has been at St. Paul's," assented the other. "But then," he added, "she may have gone somewhere else."

"No, no. I am sure she has not."

"What a pity, what a pity. I know what I shall do. I shall go and see her myself."

"It will do no good I am afraid. I went down on my knees to her. I promised her everything. I recalled to her what a frightful thing it would be for the children. But nothing had any effect."

"Has she not a woman's heart? No woman could resist such an appeal."

Jean immediately took his wife's defence. "On the contrary, she has the tenderest heart and always, up to now, has been a loving wife. But I suppose that I have strained the cord to the breaking point."

"That is right, my friend. Stand up for her" said the old gentleman approvingly. "But if that is the case she must be in love with someone else." Not receiving a reply he continued, "Does she wish to marry again?"

"Not that I know of. You see I have been away from home so long. I only returned yesterday."

The priest with the experience of the human heart gained through many years of practice at the confessional was sure that his surmise was correct and therefore changed his line of attack.

"She has not yet addressed herself to a lawyer?" he asked. "She has taken no steps?"

"No, but to-morrow I must go and explain matters to Maître Rapagon. She wishes me to engage him as her counsel."

"You to engage her lawyer! You will do no such thing. You must have nothing whatsoever to do with this matter, the church forbids it. Even from a worldly point of view you should not help her, but try to gain time. Why does she not attend to the matter herself?"

"I suppose she does not like to. She has never been used to transacting business."

"Take advantage of this sentiment to gain time," counselled his friend.

"I would like to, but she threatens that if I do not do everything in my power to help her, she will cite by name as co-respondent, a lady of our acquaintance."

"This is terrible," said the priest, very much upset. "Do not forget your prayers. Pray to the Virgin and to St. Joseph, the protector of the Christian family."

"I will follow your advice. Come to the house and take lunch, it can do no harm. See her. Perhaps you can touch some chord I have been unable to," suggested Jean with a slight smile

at the other's perturbation.

"Thank you I will. Marie," he called, "bring me my coat and hat. I will not be home to lunch."

The near-sighted priest carefully made his way down the dark stairs and conducted Jean into the street. Both remained silent during the short walk, the Abbé thinking over what he was to say and what arguments he would bring to bear, and the other brooding over his grief.

The sound of the bell interrupted Berthe and Arthur's tête-à-tête.

"Who can that be?" said Arthur.

"My husband doubtless. Do not leave," she said, as Jean accompanied by the Abbé entered, "you will stay and lunch with us. I am very glad to see you Monsieur le Curé. Will you not sit down?"

"Yes, do stay to lunch, Uncle Arthur," said Aimé, who had followed his father into the room. "You always do on Sunday you know."

The Curé noted the by-play and was more than ever convinced that his surmise was correct, and further that Arthur was the cause of Madame des Ormes' conduct. At this moment another ring sounded at the door. "Who is that coming now?" demanded Berthe.

"It is probably Maurice. I invited him to lunch," her husband replied.

"I hope that the lunch will be as good as your supper last night," she said meaningly.

"I perceive that some one amongst his other virtues possesses that of being a spy," Jean soliloquized. Arthur started, but was restrained by a gesture from Berthe.

"Good morning, Maurice," she said as he entered. "It is an age since I have set eyes on you."

Maurice bowed his thanks. "I have been away a great deal lately. I must make you my most humble excuses for my neglect. Indeed, I would scarcely have dared face your just anger if I had not met Jean who was good enough to ask me to lunch," he answered smiling.

"I suppose that he found four or five hours too long a separation," she said.

Maurice glanced quickly at Arthur, who turned red. "Four or five hours? I do not understand to what you allude, really I do not."

"It is of no consequence," she replied, and as the butler just then announced that lunch was served, she took the arm of the Curé, who had stood by an attentive observer, and followed by the others passed through the parlor into the

dining room.

Before they had seated themselves the hostess exclaimed: "Boula Omayat is coming to lunch, I had quite forgotten it. Oh, here he is now," she added, as the personage in question entered. "Excuse me for not having waited," she went on, but we were afraid you were not coming. Let me introduce you to the Abbé Moulin and to Monsieur de Paquis." The gentlemen bowed, the Curé looking very much astonished at the shaggy head and exotic appearance of the latest comer.

"Monsieur l'Abbé will you say grace?" asked Jean. The good Curé crossed himself and rapidly repeated the latin formula, wondering whether a priest in good standing of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church had ever found himself in stranger company.

"An atheist," he thought as he looked at Maurice; "a poor misguided woman," as his eye fell on Berthe, "and a servant of the devil," as he glared at Boula. Maurice apparently read his thoughts as his glance shifted from guest to guest and smiled shrewdly as their eyes met.

"I quite agree with you Monsieur l'Abbé," he said.

"I did not say anything," was the hasty reply,

"except the grace, and I am very glad if you agree with me in that."

"Boula Omayat," broke in Berthe, "will you honor us, by calling down the blessing of Krishna on the assembly?"

The Yogi extended his hands: "Krishna, holy one, may we be absorbed in thy love."

At this invocation, simple though it was, the Abbé Moulin again crossed himself rapidly and many times muttering, "Retro Satanas." Up to this moment all had remained standing, but they now seated themselves and though the Yogi denied the existence of matter and the ecclesiastic maintained that all good things were in heaven, it was observed that neither neglected what was placed before him.

The repast finished, Jean proposed that the men should stay where they were, to smoke and take their coffee. Berthe excused herself on the plea of having a headache. Boula shook his head. "Poor woman," he said in tones of profound commiseration as she left the room.

"Monsieur Omayat," exclaimed Jean angrily, "I have no intention of quarrelling with you in my own house, but I must ask you to leave my private affairs alone."

"Some day, my friend, your eyes will be

opened and you will see that all men are brothers and that there are no such things as private affairs."

"We know now that there are none when you are nosing around," cut in Maurice.

"May Krishna reveal to you the truth, young man," said the Yogi.

At this the Abbé started up. "Krishna reveal to him the truth! What is this Krishna of whom you speak? You have come into this Christian family and turned from the faith the mother and the wife. Rather pray that Christ, the Son of the Living God, may save her, you and him."

"Man, when your faith was invented mine was old."

"Do not blaspheme, lest God strike you down in your sin, devil worshipper that you are."

"Devil worshipper I? You call me this, you who worship for a God, a dead man, whose idol is a dead man hanging on a cross."

Speechless with indignation the Abbé's face flamed and he rose, quivering with emotion. "This man Christ'" he cried, "is living. He arose from the dead. He is the Son of God."

"We find legends to the same effect in many ancient mythologies," ventured Maurice, vastly amused at this interchange of compliments.

"Right you are, young man," said the Yogi. "At the dawn of history, such legends were in circulation. "

The Abbé concluded that the lunch table was not the proper place to continue the argument. "If you will excuse me," he said, "I will go in and have a word with Madame des Ormes, and then I must be leaving."

He found Berthe seated in the library. A faint smile curved her lips as she noted his flustered appearance and reflected on what must have occasioned it. The Abbé took her hand in his. "Madame, I blessed your father and mother's marriage, I christened you and gave you your first communion, when you and Jean plighted your troth I witnessed it in the name of the Most High. I trust that you will excuse me for what may seem an impertinent interference in your affairs."

"You are free to say what you please."

"Your poor husband came to me in great distress and told me what you had decided on."

"Did he tell you also how by his neglect and his infidelities he had driven me to separate myself from him—to take this step?"

"He did not attempt to palliate his faults—he admitted everything—but he is heartbroken.

Think, madame, what you are doing. Think of the effect on your children. Do not forget that the church does not recognize divorce."

"I do not wish to wound you, but the church has nothing to say to me."

"The church has nothing to say to you? Do you realize that it is God who speaks through her and that He absolutely forbids the severing of the marriage tie. 'Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her, and if a woman shall put away her husband and marry another she committeth adultery!' Forgive as you hope to be forgiven. Jean is suffering. Let me go to him and tell him that all is pardoned."

"If I did relent it would only postpone the evil day. He would begin again. You do not know what I have been through and how often I have forgiven."

"He has learnt his lesson. Give him another trial and I am certain that you will not regret it."

"I am sorry, Monsieur le Curé, but my husband never learns."

"Can I do nothing to change this resolution?"

"Nothing. My mind is made up."

"Then I must bid you good-bye. I will pray

God and the Virgin that they may soften your heart."

"May I have the pleasure of accompanying you?" asked Maurice who had entered the room as the Abbé was about to leave.

"Certainly, Monsieur de Paquis, certainly," said the good priest heartily.

"I want to speak to you about Jean," said Maurice as they walked in the direction of the Abbé's abode.

"Poor young man, I am sorry for him, but when one has sinned one must expect to suffer."

"This is aside from the question. What I wish to ask you is, can you think of any way of helping him?"

"I cannot, for I fear (and I do not think that I am guilty of a hasty conclusion) that Madame des Ormes has brought herself to believe that she is in love with someone else."

"Whose name is Arthur Bornier."

"Since you mention it, I must say that it appears so to me."

"You confirm my impression and I can see but one way to arrange the matter," said Maurice reflectively, "which is that Jean should kill Bornier."

The priest stopped short and held up his hands

with such an expression of horror on his face that his companion could not prevent a smile. "Unfortunate man," he cried, "would you make of our young friend a murderer as well as an adulterer?"

"I can see no particular objection to it," was the reply. "The Bible teaches us that he who has broken one law is guilty of having broken all. So I cannot see that killing Bornier would diminish Jean's chances of a happy hereafter. Besides that particular question does not interest me in the least."

The priest gasped. "This is awful, Monsieur de Paquis, you do not realize what you are saying?"

"But surely a man has the right to defend his home and the sanctity of the marriage tie. You yourself must admit that.

"We are taught to hate the sin, but to love the sinner. I love our young friend, but he should not have begun by sinning."

"I entirely agree with you. But now that it is done, he must defend himself."

"Defend himself, yes; but I cannot admit that it is ever right to murder."

"I did not say that he should murder him," corrected Maurice.

"Why you just said that Jean ought to kill Monsieur Bornier."

"Certainly but he need not murder him to do that. He can insult him on some pretext and then, as he is a good shot, kill him to-morrow morning: the sooner the better."

"But dueling is contrary to Christ's teachings. It is nothing else than murder."

"Excuse me Monsieur le Curé, if I disagree with you, but in my estimation dueling is not only Christain in its origin, which is to be sought for in the judgment of God or trial by combat, but also in its essence."

"I do not see how you can make that out," replied the Abbé. "Our Lord most certainly said. 'If he smite you on one cheek turn to him the other cheek also.' "

"Then would Christ have said 'If he steal your wife's affection give him her body also?' But the duellist is more Royalist than the King, more Christian than Christ: Instead of only turning the other cheek he allows the smiter to shoot at him the next morning."

"Your argument is ingenious but specious," the priest replied, smiling in spite of himself, "and shows why the interpretation of the

Scriptures should be intrusted to the church alone."

"I should not be surprised if it were rather sophistical," and Maurice returned his smile. "But seriously the dueling code seems to me in a certain sense to be as truly Christian in its spirit as is barbarous and cowardly the unwritten law now held in such esteem in the United States. Under the old pagan and under the new brainstorm system you simply make away with the man that displeases you. You give him no chance for his life, you strike at him from behind. In the duel, on the contrary, for cowardice you substitute bravery and for treachery fair play."

"But you have no right to kill at all, fairly or treacherously," replied the priest.

"Is it not allowable to defend one's life even to the extent of killing?"

"Most assuredly, that is a right recognized by human as well as divine legislation."

"And is not honor dearer and more precious than life? No, Monsieur le Curé," continued Maurice. "The duellist puts into practice the gospel precept of doing unto others as ye would that they should do unto you; he says, 'It is true that this man has greviously offended me, has

wronged me most outrageously; but nevertheless I will give him a chance for his life.' And so instead of shooting him in the back with an automatic pistol he risks his existence against his enemy's."

"Monsieur de Paquis I ask you," said the Abbé, "not to counsel Jean in this manner. Be patient and you will see that God will interfere to protect the right. He will even perform a miracle if necessary."

"I do not believe in miracles," replied the other, "but I promise you that I will not be hasty, that I will not advise Jean to fight until every other means has been exhausted."

"Thank you, you will not regret this, and God will bless you for it. But here I am at home. Will you not come in for a few moments?"

"Excuse me, Monsieur l'Abbé if I look at my watch. Yes, I have the time. I will accept with pleasure, it is now quite a while since I have been to see you," and he followed the old priest up the winding stairs.

Over the bottle of wine which Marie had placed before them the two continued their conversation. "Ah, Monsieur de Paquis, what an awful thing this divorce is," began the Abbé.

"On this point we both agree, although for dif-

ferent reasons, since of course I do not accept your dogma of the sacramental nature of the marriage relation."

"Yet you would insist on its indissolubility?" asked the surprised Abbé.

"Most assuredly, and when I said that our reasons were different I was speaking carelessly. The church in her wisdom, gained through long experience, saw that the family tie would have to be strengthened if civilization was to advance along the lines which it had taken in our western communities, and she therefore raised the primeval marriage tie to the dignity of a sacrament. You accept as your reason the decision of the church. I accept as mine the facts on which that decision was based. The Protestants think differently, their religion being more individualistic. Accordingly they have allowed divorce and in one well known case, Luther and Melancthon authorized bigamy."

"I know nothing of the Protestants; but marriage—especially the Christian marriage—is a divine institution. 'These two shall become one flesh.' It is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ."

"How then can you explain that St. Gregory of Tours speaks approvingly of the Christian

king, who married to a barren wife, followed the example of Abraham and took unto himself a concubine? 'At the intercession of the Virgin' exclaims the holy chronicler, 'a child was born to them.' "

"I cannot believe that a saint would have approved of an adultery."

"Perhaps not," replied Maurice. "But if things continue at the present rate we will have to make a serious change in the organization of our society, or rather the change will accomplish itself. We will no longer be able to accept the family as the social unit."

"What then would you have?" asked the priest.

"There are two forces working towards the suppression of marriage. The misuse of the institution and the economic freedom of women. An institution which ceases to fulfil the object for which it was created must die. Consider the feudal system. Originally a compact by which the strong were to protect the weak, in return for which protection they were entitled to exact certain services, the nobles in the end neglected their duties and thought only of their rights. The result was the destruction of the system. So with marriage. It was instituted for the or-

derly propagation of the human species. With the introduction of race suicide it has been diverted from its purpose and has come to be looked on only as a legal means for the gratification of lust; hence its decay."

"You are right, my friend," replied the Abbé. "In almost every relation of life we have placed the cart before the horse. We should not work to live, but live to work. Goodness is the consequence of happiness and not happiness of goodness, and true happiness can only be found in submission to the Divine Will. But what were you going to say about the economic freedom of woman?"

"Simply this: It is obvious that women capable of caring for themselves will no longer marry with the sole aim of being supported. The fact that the birth of a child outside of wedlock has been considered a disgrace to a woman, is purely an economic phenomenon. The idea underlying all sex prejudice, is the necessity of preventing children being brought into the world with no positive claim on the father for support. When a brother shoots his sister's betrayer and is applauded by his neighbors, unconsciously he and with him the community are actuated by the desire to protect the pecuniary

resources of the family and of the state by rendering illicit propagation dangerous. That the husband slays the wife's paramour is attributable to his insistence that no doubt shall be thrown on the paternity of the children he is called on to support. We have not gotten over the idea that women are our property. The protection we grant them is a sign of their dependency, a species of Monroe Doctrine as it were.

"Now let women once acquire economic freedom. Being able to support such children as they might see fit to bring into the world they would rather resent than otherwise, the slaughter of their lovers, nor would their brothers have any motive for going to this extreme. In England in the first half of the nineteenth century, when through the indiscriminate distribution of out-door relief, the girl-mother became a source of revenue to her family, bastardy ceased to be shameful."

"I suppose that your induction is," said the Abbé, "that eventually marriage will cease and the unit of society, instead of being the family as at present constituted, will be the mother surrounded by her children. And this," cried the Abbé, "is the boasted progress which the Protestants, the Socialists and the Free Masons ask

us to admire!" He raised his hands as he spoke and let them fall heavily on his knees.

"Yes, that is about it, and if we wish to conserve our present form of civilization we must turn all our efforts to the strengthening of the family tie. I admit that the absence of divorce in some cases entails frightful hardships, but these must be the price we pay for the many advantages we derive from our complicated social organization."

"It is right that you should study the human side of the question, but how beautiful is the doctrine of the church, that marriage is a sacred and holy state in which according to God's law one man is to be joined to one woman, in sorrow and in joy until death shall them part. If the oath of one is violated let the other remain true. With divorce and race suicide everything is altered. How can a woman expect her husband to fulfil his contract and remain faithful if she shirks her duty by refusing to bear him children?"

"Indeed, how can she?" replied Maurice. "Then again race suicide is a sign of devitalization. The man no longer has the force of character to insist on the woman fulfilling her obligation or else he lacks confidence in himself as a

provider. But let me ask you, Monsieur l'Abbé, did you ever consider the physiological aspect of divorce?"

"I cannot say that I have," replied the Curé.

"As you are well aware," went on Maurice, "when breeding animals one must use the greatest care in the selection of the first mate, for his qualities will influence for good or bad all the female's future offspring. That the same is true with human beings cannot be doubted. And it is but natural that it should be so. The mother derives from her unborn child certain traits of the father which may be transmitted to the fruit of another union. Her recollections and the comparisons, she cannot fail to make, must also exercise a profound influence. Here lies the great objection to divorce and to the re-marriage of widows. The fact that retroactive jealousy, the jealousy of acts committed before marriage, is so powerful in men and so weak in women is to be attributed to this same hidden cause. It was also probably for this reason that Jesus Christ permitted a man to put away his wife for fornication, that is for an antenuptial fault."

"You still persist in looking only at the natural side of the question," replied the priest.

"But why search for recondite explanations when obvious ones are at hand? For instance, did you ever wonder why it was that deeply religious people—I do not refer to hypocrites—are so often excessively sensual and so prone to be addicted to the pleasures of the flesh?"

"I have observed it, and I presume that it is because God wishes, by making clear to us our weakness, to prevent pride of heart," replied the Abbé.

"My explanation is quite different. There are three basic passions governing human action: hunger, sex appetite and religious emotion. The one great principle underlying these is the instinct of self preservation, the longing to prolong life. We eat to maintain life, we propagate in order that we may live again in our children and we hope through religion to continue to live in some mysterious hereafter. A person possessed of strong emotions is forced to give them expression in one or more of these forms. There is the solution, for a deeply religious nature presupposes deep emotions.'

"I cannot possibly admit," remonstrated the Abbé, "that sensualism and religion are but two manifestations of the same impulse—I cannot possibly admit that."

"But how can you deny it? The devout girl, especially she who mortifies her body, becomes with the greatest ease a voluptuary, and to show that the contrary is also true I need but point to Mary Magdalen."

The priest hesitated a moment. "Yes, that is true, for we priests are warned to be more than circumspect in our dealings with unusually devout women."

"There you are, you see," said Maurice. "Now I do not wish to offend you, but here is a strange thought. In the doctrine of trans-substantiation we find these three ideas embodied: the consecrated host is the actual body of the man Jesus loved of Mary Magdalen, the Man whose perfect chastity enthralls while it exasperates the feminine imagination. It is food with all that this word implies and then again it is God. Can we wonder at the strength of a church whose principal belief thus appeals to the basic impulse of our nature? The Man God says 'My body is indeed food.' "

With these words Maurice took out his watch. "I must be going, Monsieur le Curé," he said, "or I shall miss my engagement. You must be glad to get rid of me."

"Oh, no, your conversation interested me very

much. You certainly have novel ideas. Do not forget your promise about Jean. And—God bless you. You may not be as far as you think from accepting the truth."

IX.

Soon after the departure of Maurice and the priest, Arthur Bornier and Boula Omayat also took their leave. "We shall meet to-night at Madame de Tourville's," said Arthur as he pressed her hand.

"Certainly. And are you going to Madame Rondin's supper?" she asked.

"You are to be there. Is not that a sufficient answer to your question?"

Having walked a few steps in silence. "Tell me, Milovitch," at length asked Arthur snickering, "what did you do to Madame des Ormes and how much did you get out of her?"

"Be careful," said the other sharply as he looked suspiciously around, "do not mention my name in the street. We may be followed. The Russian Secret Service has its spies everywhere. As to the money matter we will settle that later." Arthur made a gesture of dissent.

"Tell me at least how much it was."

"Not very much, two hundred francs. I will give you a hundred when we are safe at Masoushka's."

"Undoubtedly you are lying and she gave you more—she did last time. But go on tell me what you did."

The man laughed as he answered. "I made her think that she had seen the devil in person."

Arthur looked startled as he asked. "How did you manage? She is not a woman to be easily taken in."

"The trick was simple. With the aid of the butler, I had hidden Dimitri dressed in pink, silk tights under the sofa. You can divine the rest."

"That is why Dimitri was so late last night at the casino," thought Arthur. "Be careful, do not go too far. You might kill the goose that lays the golden eggs," he said aloud, laughing at his witticism. "But look here," he continued, "and this is more serious. Something must be done about Paulovitch. He will get us all into trouble, if he keeps on. Last night at the casino he was even more drunk than usual and in a moment of fury threw a champagne bottle at Jacques Grandin, fortunately missing him. He was arrested and it was only with the greatest difficulty that

I pursuaded the police to consent to his release. They said nothing, but I could see that they were becoming suspicious."

"We shall probably find him and Masoushka at home. Do not worry. I will give him a piece of my mind."

"Let us hope that it will do him some good, though I doubt it."

"Wait and see. But your heedlessness in mentioning my name is quite as perilous as his drunken carouses. Let the police once find out who I am and it will be all over with me. I really do not see what induced Mashouska to let you into my secret."

"I forgot. And anyway we were alone, there was no one even in sight."

"That makes no difference. I am afraid that in any event I must be leaving. A lady, a Madame Versovitch, who owns large estates in a locality where I made myself very objectionable to the oppressors of the poor, has recently arrived in Geneva, and she may recognize me in spite of my disguise.

"But you have nothing to fear. Switzerland has always refused to extradite political offenders. It is only common law criminals that she surrenders."

"Is that so?" And Milovitch looked disagreeably at his companion.

"You know that as well as I do."

"Well, drop the subject. But now that we are nearly at our destination I wish to ask you what your intentions are towards Masoushka."

"My intentions? What do you mean by my intentions?"

"Do not try and play the innocent with me. You are perfectly well aware of the signification of my words. You seem to take a great deal of interest in her and I would like to know what your attentions mean."

"Although I cannot see that it is any affair of yours, still I am willing to admit that I admire her very much. You did not suppose that it was you or Nicholas that constituted the attraction, did you?"

"Stop your sneering. I have no particular interest in the matter one way or the other. A woman is a free agent and I cannot see where the resemblance lies, that some would establish, between robbing a man of his pocketbook and depriving him of the company of his female companion. The acts are totally different and so though Nicholas is my friend I shall say nothing. But any disturbance at present would

be excessively disagreeable to me."

"If you do not want a disturbance the best thing for you to do is to keep your hands off," said Arthur sullenly.

"I wish to warn you that Nicolas Paulovitch is not a man with whom one may trifle with impunity, he is violent, utterly reckless, and unscrupulous."

"Many thanks for your warning. I can take care of myself."

They had now reached the house, and having climbed the long flights, found themselves once more in the hall beneath the skylight. "Good afternoon, Masoushka," said Arthur, as in answer to his ring the girl opened the door. "Is Nicholas at home?"

"Yes," she replied with a sigh, half of amusement and half of self-pity. "He is, and what is more, he is excessively cross with a bad headache."

"That is not surprising, after the way he carried on last night."

"Arthur is right and Nicholas must really be more careful," interrupted Milovitch. "If he keeps on drinking this way he will ruin his nerve and there will be an accident. Besides, he runs the risk of exciting the curiosity of the police."

"That is what I tell him," assented the girl, "but when once drink takes hold of a man there is nothing to be done."

"Who is that, Masoushka?" growled Nicholas from within. "Will my head never stop aching?"

"It is Arthur and Milovitch," she replied. "As for your head, put some more ice on it, that is the best thing."

"Or better still, stop your drinking," scolded Milovitch as he entered the room where extended on a couch lay Nicholas with a towel around his head.

"Mind your own business! I will drink what I want, and when I want," replied the latter in surly tones.

"With your permission, I consider that it is my business. In the first place your continual brawls will finish by attracting the attention of the police and everyone will get into trouble—I among the rest. And," he looked around the room as he asked the question, "do you consider this a fit place for a drunken man or a nervous wreck to be turned loose in?"

A single glance would have satisfied anyone of the truth of this last reflection, for so full of explosives was it, that the powder magazine of a

man-of-war would have been a fitter place for a man not in possession of his faculties. To protect the interior from the gaze of prying eyes newspapers had been glued over the panes of the one window, which opened on a court to admit the necessary light and air into the tiny room. Beneath it a table had been placed on which reposed amongst retorts and other chemical apparatus a bomb, loaded and ready for use.

Shelves built against the wall were laden with bottles containing acid, volatile oils and powders of various kinds. In one corner stood a stove in which a brisk fire was burning, for the day was cold. Over the shabby couch on which the sick man lay groaning, hung a bookcase crowded with the most modern works on chemistry and from beneath it projected the ends of two or three sections of iron gas-piping.

To Milovitch's sermon Nicholas grunted an inarticulate reply. Then turning to Masoushka "There is no ice here," he fretfully complained. "Bring me some more, my head is splitting. And while you are about it, get me a glass of vodka."

"Why do you not listen to Milovitch? You had better not drink any more," she remonstrated. But at the look of anger in his face she hastily left the room, and returned carrying

a bowl of ice and a bottle of Russian spirits with the necessary glasses. "Perhaps you are right, the vodka will steady your nerves," she said.

When he had swallowed his dram she gently removed the towel and filling it with ice replaced it on his burning head. How strong and deep is that instinct which impels a woman to care for the weak and helpless! What sweetness and gentleness lie hidden in every woman's heart! Masoushka, who would without a qualm have blown a thousand innocent fellow beings to atoms to further what she considered a just cause, was as loving and tender as a sister of charity in the care she lavished on this man, whom she feared and hated.

"What brought you here to-day?" snarled Nicholas as he laid his head once more on the cushion she had smoothed for him. "Is there any news?" And turning to Arthur who stood near the girl, "I think I know what you came for."

"We wanted to see how you were getting on, and I have a little private business to talk over with Milovitch," replied Arthur good naturedly.

"And I came to tell you," said the pseudo-mystic, "that Wassily has arrived from Russia.

He is at the house up the lake and wishes to see you to-night. You must take the nine o'clock train." At this announcement Arthur and Masoushka endeavored to appear unconcerned, but involuntarily their looks met and she cast down her eyes and blushed. If Milovitch noticed anything he concealed the fact and Nicholas was too much occupied with his head to pay any great attention to what was going on around him.

"Come, Milovitch," said Arthur, "are you going to hand over what you owe me?"

"And if I do not, what then?" replied the other glancing meaningly at Masoushka.

"Why I will make you. That is simple enough."

"Make me? How can you do that? I am not accustomed to being made to do things."

"A word from me and the whole gang——." Scarcely had these words left Arthur's lips when Nicholas forgetting his aching head sprang to his feet and covered the young man with a revolver which had lain concealed at his side.

"Be careful what you say or I will blow your brains out," he roared. Arthur, though a scoundrel, was not a coward. He looked contemptuously at the Russian.

"Keep quiet, Nicholas, put up your pistol. Milovitch was right when he said that your

nerves were unstrung. You know very well that you can trust me. But I insist that Milovitch pay his debt."

With a furious glance Nicholas threw himself on the couch and turned his face to the wall. "Give him his money," he said.

"Here it is," and Milovitch handed Arthur a hundred franc note.

"Good-bye. I have gotten what I came for." Masoushka followed him into the hall.

"Be careful, dear," she whispered as he caught her in his arms and kissed her, "Nicholas is growing jealous. His suspicions are aroused and he sometimes frightens me by his violence."

"My own love," he said as he pressed her head against his heart, "'you are mine, for after last night nothing can separate us."

"But you understood what Milovitch implied?"

Arthur laughed gently. "To-night, dearest," and he lowered his voice to the merest whisper, "Nicholas, as you heard, will be absent. I will come for you as soon as I am free. It will be morning before he returns. You can easily slip back in time. There is no danger," he hastened to assure her as he noted her undecided look, "will you come?"

For answer she held up her lips for him to kiss.

"What were you saying to Arthur?" snarled Nicholas as she re-entered the room. "I thought that you were never coming back."

"I was only showing him to the door."

"You were a deucedly long while opening and closing a door. Look here, I will have no nonsense. Tell me, what were you talking about?"

"About nothing, except that he was asking me to keep you from drinking so much. I did not wish to tell you, for I knew it would annoy you, and Milovitch has already said the same thing. I told him not to worry, that you knew what you were about."

"He takes too damn much interest in us," muttered Nicholas. He raised his head and let it fall again with a groan. "You be careful or you will get into trouble with me."

"Leave the girl alone," broke in Milovitch, "she is all right, but try and get yourself together. Wassily is very anxious to see you. He is organizing a plot," here he lowered his voice so that he could not have been heard a yard away, "to blow up the winter palace, so try to get yourself together."

"Very well. I will make an effort. Come,

Masoushka, bring me my things."

She brought him his clothes and helped him put them on. When he was ready to go out, "you will be back for supper?" she asked.

"Yes, we will have time to eat before I start. Meet me in the usual place at seven o'clock. I am going out for a walk to get some fresh air."

As soon as Milovitch and the girl were alone, he began, "Masoushka, you had better look out. Nicholas is growing suspicious. I wonder he has not noticed your infatuation before."

She shrugged her shoulders. "What if he is suspicious?" she asked. "He has no claim on me. Freely we united and freely we shall separate. There is no marriage to gall us with its heavy chain."

He shook his head. "I am an old man and have seen much, and believe me, when I say that it is not the ceremony that makes the marriage tie, nor even that which the civil law terms *concubitus* nor even the *consensus;* but it is the constant communion and contact, physical and mental. You are united by no legal bond, but you have lived together now for several years. You have had common interests and common troubles and have been in continual association with the same objects. The same sounds produce

the same thoughts, the same odors recall the same events. Again I say be careful. The links that attach you to Nicholas are stronger than you think, as you may find out to your cost."

The girl turned her back and picking up a piece of sewing was soon absorbed in her task.

X.

WHEN the guests had departed Jean proceeded to prepare himself for the ride to St. Leger which he had arranged for. "It seems to me," said Berthe, when he came to bid her good-bye, "that you might find something better to do than to go around speaking to everyone of our affairs, as you did to the Abbé Moulin."

"Have you never spoken to anyone on the subject?" he asked.

"That is my business," she replied, "I suppose that you are now going to discuss it with Madame de Muriel."

"And if I do, I cannot see the harm. As for the Abbé Moulin, he is an old friend. I consider it most natural that I should have spoken to him and I certainly shall say only kind things of you to Madame de Muriel."

"I understand you. You think by saying nice things of me to turn sympathy in your favor. It is just like you to attempt to destroy my reputation after having made me miserable for

years. Do not forget that this evening we are to dine with your old mistress, Juliette de Tourville. Be back in time to dress. I do not wish to be kept waiting."

The rain of the day before had softened the roads, making them very agreeable for riding, and it was with a feeling of real pleasure that Jean found himself once more, his favorite horse between his knees, trotting along the familiar roads. The animal was excited by that touch of sharpness in the air which comes with the first fall of snow on the mountains and pulled eagerly against the curb. The wind had fallen and the columns of smoke from the piles of burning leaves ascended vertically in the still air. From the meadows sounded the melodious tinkling of cowbells. On the branches of the oaks still clung the thick brown rustling leaves, but the knobby gnarled limbs of the sycamores which bordered the road, were almost bare.

On the lawns of handsomely planted country places the bright reds and yellows of the ornamental shrubs shone against the dark green of the laurels. Here and there a hunter appeared, lazily wandering across the fields in search of the elusive hare, his gun over his

shoulder and preceded by his dog. After half an hour's steady trot he turned to the left and mounted a steep road which led to the gate of Monsieur de Muriel's property of St. Leger.

The chateau was noted far and wide for the incomparable view which it commanded, for the beauty of its gardens and for the manuscripts and art treasures which it contained. Built under Louis XV., by a banker who had enriched himself at the time of Law's bubble, it had come into the possession of the present owner's family through a marriage.

At the end of the long avenue of mighty oaks, whose beauty always aroused his admiration, Jean drew rein. As he dismounted and handed his bridle to the groom who had come running from the neighboring stable, he could catch glimpses of the sunken gardens with their masses of richly toned chrysanthemums, with here and there a late blooming rose.

He mounted the broad flight of steps and rang the bell. "Is Madame at home?" he inquired of the footman who opened the door. At the affirmative reply he followed the servant across the hall into the salon.

Many portraits hung upon the walls of this room, prominent among which was that of

Voltaire. It had been presented to Monsieur de Muriel's ancestor by the Patriarch of Fernex himself. The witty cynical face which looked down from the old gold frame was a never ceasing source of pleasure to Jean. As he stood contemplating it, Madame de Muriel entered.

"Madame allow me to kiss your hand," he said bowing, as he raised her fingers to his lips.

"Come, Jean, sit down by me on the sofa and tell me about your voyage," she replied.

Madame de Muriel was that most perfect of all beings—a beautiful woman, who making friends of her advancing years had grown old gracefully. Her hair was snow white and her pink complexion was as fresh as a young girl's. Her dark blue eyes, in which still glowed much of the fire of youth, shone from beneath penciled eyebrows. The lines at the corners of her sensitive mouth spoke of deep suffering patiently borne, but her expression was serene. Her shoulders were covered with a scarf of Flemish point, held in place by a diamond brooch. Her youthful figure was set off by a dark lavender gown.

When Jean had finished, "So you have had rather an exciting time of it, have you not?" she said in a low, gentle voice, "and you must be glad

to be home once more. You have such a charming family. I really do not understand how you can leave them."

"Madame," said Jean, "you have always been so sweet and dear to me," and he took her soft hand in his, "that I am going to ask you a question. Do you mind?"

"Surely not, Jean. If it is anything that I can and may tell you I will do so," she replied, a note of astonishment in her voice.

"Have you heard any rumors about Berthe and Arthur Bornier?"

She hesitated. "They have been seen together a great deal these last few months," she replied at length.

"Has anyone placed an unkind construction on this intimacy?" He arose and paced about the room, his hands behind his back.

"Never that I have heard of. People think her very imprudent, that is all. I do not wish to say anything unkind, but his reputation is very bad."

He halted for a moment. "She is going to divorce me."

"I am so sorry. Can I do nothing to help you? Calm yourself and sit down."

"It is hard to have my home broken up in

this way—by such a scamp as Arthur Bornier."

"I am sure of one thing," said the old lady, "Berthe respects herself too much to have been untrue to her vows."

"Of that I am as sure as you are. If I were not, my proceedings would have been much more energetic."

"Jean, I am an old lady and I have known you ever since you were born. You have not acted as you should towards your wife. I speak plainly. I realize as well as you do her shortcomings, but then you are a man and instead of having allowed yourself to be blown hither and thither you should have been strong and firm for the two. A woman wants to be led and she would submit to anything rather than neglect. In her husband she seeks a protector and a lover. In default of one she will content herself with the other—but one she *must* have.

"Let your wife feel that your hand is ever ready to defend her, that your strength will be a shield for her weakness, and then, even if you fall, she will never waver in her allegiance. Or be her lover, stay true to her and in spite of your weaknesses she will cling to you. She will regard you in the light of a child. She may not let you know it, but such will be her feelings,

and she will defend you as a tigress defends her cubs. Pardon me, dear boy, have you been either of these to your wife?

"You see, she has some excuse for her acts. Not that it is ever quite excusable for a woman with children to divorce, but think of her position. She has loved you deeply, as you know, and now she in turn wants to be loved. Love wears itself away against the stone of indifference—even the greatest love. You remember the legend of the Roc, how he comes every thousand years and rubs his beak, once only, against an immense mountain of granite. Some day, oh, not to-morrow, or the day after, but some day, that mountain will be worn away.

"So it is with love, even the love a mother bears the father of her children. It seems so great that it overshadows everything. It seems eternal. But, nevertheless, indifference and neglect will finally do what one great blow could never have done." She ceased and laid her hand upon his bowed head.

"If I had only confided in you before," he said. "If I had only spoken to you! Can you see no hope?"

"I am afraid not. Unless something should happen which we cannot now foresee. Berthe's

mind is made up. Poor girl, I pity her. Jean, you must face your troubles like a man. I can tell you now," she continued, "I have seen Berthe. Some weeks ago she spoke to me about this divorce. I besought her to remember her children and forgive you. I even told her what I had never before breathed to any living being and which I will now tell you. A few words will describe what was to me an eternity of suffering. I trust you, Jean, to keep my confidence sacred." She paused a moment and then began.

"I loved my husband deeply. You know how good and kind he is, how honorable and truthful. One day I discovered he loved my sister. I found them together. Oh, the agonies that I endured. I locked myself in my room and prayed God to end my life. Just to think, Jean, in an instant all was taken from me—my sister and my husband. I had loved them deeply and they had betrayed me. In my first sorrow and despair, forgetting my children, I swore that I would be revenged—that I would divorce and forever rid myself of a man who had proved unworthy. But God in His mercy saved me from this sin. I fell seriously ill, and when I recovered, I found my poor sister, my poor

Amélie had been killed by a fall from her horse. Then I forgave Pierre.

"I realized that in such a contract a third party intervenes—even God—that marriage was not a simple agreement by two people to live together, but a sacred bond; that no violation of the compact by either could release the other.

"Then there was my family. New lives had been brought into being, things could never be as they had been: others were interested in our tie. So, as I said, I forgave. And God has blessed me, oh, much more than I deserve. Pierre has come back to me and hand in hand we walk down the road of life in the golden twilight of old age, and every day I thank God that I obeyed my good angel's voice."

"Did you tell all this to Berthe?" asked Jean much affected.

"Yes," she replied, "but the experience of old age teaches no one." And she shook her head. "But here comes Pierre. He will be glad to see you."

As she spoke, Monsieur de Muriel, attired in rough clothes, as befitted the country, walked into the room. In one hand he held a pipe, the other he extended to Jean. "Glad to see you, my boy," he said; "so you kept your prom-

ise. It is too bad you did not get back in time for the *vendanges*. It was an excellent year. Good wine and plenty of it."

"How does your friend Lacroix, the vineyard-owning prohibition agitator, like this? I suppose he feels placed between two fires."

"Damn those temperance people. Pardon me, my dear," and he turned to his wife, "I quite lose my temper when I think of them—they ought all to be hanged, especially such a canting, pietistic old hypocrite as Lacroix. Will you excuse us, I want Jean to come into the library to see that manuscript that I was telling you about. The pastor Poirier is already there."

"Certainly," she replied. "Come and see me soon again, Jean. Have courage and face your troubles like a man."

"Those temperance cranks are such fools," Mauriel said, as he led the way to the library. "They cannot see that the most progressive countries are those that drink the most. Look at Turkey, filled with the worshippers of Allah, who do not know what a glass of wine is. Are they the world's leaders, tell me? Then look at Germany, France and England, and even our tiny Switzerland. We are total abstainers, are

we not? And we are away behind the times, I suppose?"

"But you must admit," said Jean laughingly, as they entered the library, "that alcohol does a great deal of harm. How do you do, Monsieur le Pasteur," he added, turning to that gentleman who had risen at their approach.

Of almost dwarfish stature, his face was clean shaven, except for the short gray side-whiskers which ornamented his sheep-like countenance. His stooping shoulders, covered by a black frock coat, were powdered with dandruff, and his low cut, spotted, greasy waistcoat disclosed a soiled white lawn bow tie. "Very well, I thank you," Monsieur des Ormes," replied the clergyman. "Monsieur de Muriel, I have been thinking while sitting here surrounded by the records of your illustrious family—what a great thing it is to have ancestors."

"It would be if one were sure of really having them," replied Monsieur de Muriel. "Are you not aware that most pedigrees are necessarily false?" he added, as he read the look of interrogation in the pastor's face.

"How is that? I am aware that some are false, but yours is surely true. It is an historical fact."

"I could tell that better if I had been the confessor of all my ancestresses. You see," he explained, "in our family we have about twenty generations. If one of the twenty wives that this implies has been untrue, the whole genealogy is false. One in twenty, that is five per cent. and surely you must admit that my claim that five per cent of wives are unfaithful, is not exaggerated. What do you think? But Jean and I were discussing alcohol, and I maintain that the good it does is greatly underestimated."

"I, myself, am not averse to an occasional glass," said the clergyman, "but I am afraid that we are too apt to abuse what would otherwise be one of God's best gifts. 'Wine which maketh glad the heart of man.' "

"That last text states the truth," approved Muriel. "Wine is the poor man's luxury. *We* can work with the hope of buying automobiles and diamonds for our wives and sweethearts. I am sure that even the pastor here is saving to buy a rope of pearls for the Prima Ballerina. Do not blush, it is nothing to be ashamed of. But what more has the poor man than his wine? Deprive him of this and he will not work half so hard."

"The proof of which statement," cut in Jean,

"is that the missionaries find it necessary to give the savages a taste for gin and teach them the use of gunpowder before being able to civilize and Christianize them."

The pastor looked from one to the other, incomprehension written on his countenance. "And," continued Muriel, "alcohol eliminates the weak. The man whose character is not sufficiently forceful to resist the temptation of too frequent tippling dies young and his descendants, if he has any, tend to disappear in the third generation. The law of the survival of the strong and the suppression of the feeble. War has latterly become very infrequent in Europe—war, the great eliminator of the unfit—and the consumption of alcohol has enormously increased. Gin shops have replaced the battlefield.

"Nature is bound in the long run to have her way. The weak must make way for the strong. It is the universal law which, though we may change its mode of expression, we cannot abolish. But, excuse me," he added, "I must show the doctor what he has come to see."

"I would be much obliged if you would," said the clergyman.

The room in which they were conversing was broad and long, its walls lined with bookcases

reaching to the ceiling and filled with books, many of them in eighteenth century bindings, and some of an even earlier period. Muriel led the way towards a safe built in one of the walls. He drew a large key from his pocket and inserted it in the lock.

"Let me see," he said, "I believe it was that comedy of your arch enemy .Voltaire that you wished to see, is it not? By the way, doctor," he continued, as he pulled open a drawer filled with precious manuscripts, "speaking of Voltaire, makes me think of the prayer attributed to the Genevese clergy of his time, 'Oh, God, if you exist have mercy on my soul if I possess one.' Non-commital gentlemen your predecessors, were they not?"

In the safe, which now stood open before them, was contained, as historians well knew, a unique collection of documents. Here were autograph letters of Calvin and of Aggripa d'Aubigné and of many other notables of the time of the Reformation. Although Muriel had never consented to their publication, here hidden away were writings bearing on the trial of Servetus which threw new lights on this much discussed question.

Here also were descriptions by eye witnesses

of the death of Calvin, explaining the nature of the mysterious, some say shameful, disease which carried him off. Two autograph letters of the great Elizabeth of England and three of Henry IV of France were here. But what could be of greater interest than the letters of Jean Jacques Rousseau, annotated by Voltaire? In one drawer lay an almost complete pack of cards, on which the philosopher had written to his near neighbors, the Muriels, inquiring, amongst other things, as to their health and as to the proper care of fig trees. While their host was looking for the comedy, the other two entered into conversation.

"Did you have a pleasant voyage, Monsieur des Ormes?" asked Poirier in an unctuous voice.

"Yes. I enjoyed myself immensely."

"Did you, may I ask, come in contact with any missionaries?"

"I had the pleasure of meeting quite a number, both Protestant and Catholic."

"I suppose that you will be prejudiced, but how did they compare as to the results of their ministrations?"

"They were most excellent men, although not of an extremely high order of intelligence. The principal difference I noticed was that our

priests lived with their people and made themselves one with their flocks, whereas the Protestant pastors, accompanied as they were by their wives and children, necessarily placed a certain distance between themselves and the natives. They appeared, especially the English, with their tennis and their afternoon tea, to have planted a piece of Europe in the midst of the wilderness."

The pastor reflected a moment. "There is certainly truth in what you say, my young friend, but then I do not believe in the celibacy of the clergy. It is against human nature. It is impossible to observe."

"Since you have introduced the subject, let me remark that you are still a young man and yet you have been a widower for the last twenty years. How, may I ask, have you managed?"

The clergyman did not know exactly whether to be vexed or pleased at this allusion to his vigor, but fortunately the necessity of a reply was obviated by Muriel.

"Here is what I have been looking for," said the latter, as he held up a manuscript in copy-book form, "and here is the letter of Monsieur de Voltaire to my great-grandmother which accompanied it."

The clergyman seized the document and devoured it with greedy eyes. "Voltaire," explained their host to Jean, "was at this time exiled from Paris and the Genevese authorities would not allow theatrical performances on the soil of the Republic. Consequently, he built a theatre in his chateau of Fernex. The aristocracy of Geneva were invited to attend the representations, for the actors were chiefly chosen from their midst. My great-grandmother always filled one of the principal rôles. On one occasion, not having received her lines, she wrote to Fernex, asking that they be sent to her. You see by this letter that Voltaire replied that he was sorry, but on account of the absence of his secretary he could not furnish her with a clean copy. With many excuses he begged leave to send the play as he had written it; and here it is."

It was growing late and as the others were about to plunge into a learned discussion of the text, Jean prepared to take his departure. "Will you not stay to dinner," asked Muriel hospitably.

"I am much obliged to you, but we are dining to-night with Madame de Tourville. Please say good-bye for me to Madame de Muriel."

"I am sorry that you cannot stay. Some other time, then. Come soon, and bring Berthe." When Jean had left the room the pastor addressed Muriel.

"He is very intelligent, but rather impertinent. There are also rumors of trouble between him and his wife. It is a pity that he should be entangled in the errors of Rome. What he needs is more of this," and he drew a greasy Bible from his pocket and laid it on the table beside Voltaire's manuscript.

XI.

Tourville, at whose house Jean and Berthe were dining that Sunday evening, was an intellectual and equine dilettante. His library was filled with unread books and his stable with unridden horses. But he was withal, a clever writer and a good horseman. His married life had been a happy one. There were to be sure rumors that the pearls of the *première danseuse* of the opera were his gift, but no one knew for a certainty.

Of all her sex Madame de Tourville was certainly the most charming. When a smile unlocked the mischievous curve of her red lips, there were disclosed two rows of tiny, even pearly teeth and a pointed tongue, pink like a young animal's. Her face was framed by brown hair, the high lights picked out in gold. Art stepping in had added to her supreme beauty by relieving with a faint blush of color the excessive paleness of her dead-white complexion. Of medium height, the lines of her figure were

classically pure. What so few women possess were hers in all their perfection: well molded arms. Add to this, charming manners, grace of movement and kindness of heart, and it was no wonder that she was universally liked even by her fellow-women. There was just enough scandal connected with her name to make her interesting and to give the gossips a chance. This talk concerned the paternity of Paulette, her only child, now ten years old. By some it was attributed to Jean, but this was indignantly denied by others.

The Tourville house, as were many others in that old quarter of the town, was built around a court, to which access was had through one of those porte cochères erected in the reign of Louis XV., to the great scandal of the Puritans of that day. "The devil will drive through them into the midst of our homes," they used to say. The interior was most sumptuously decorated, and was a veritable museum of authentic furniture in the styles of the Empire of Louis XVI and of Louis XV. Tourville for illuminating purposes had retained the old fashioned wax candles. He realized that no light ever invented was half so flattering and mellow. Youth by its rays is rendered more

beautiful and the harsh lines of old age are softened.

The salon into which Jean and Berthe were introduced was of the purest Louis XV. A Louis XV of the reign of that king himself, and not one of those bastard styles, degraded rococo combined with *art moderne,* that so often offends one's eyes. Against the walls were gigantic gilt bronze brackets, each containing fifty blazing candles. In the panels hung family portraits; syndics, ministers of the Gospel and soldiers.

The Tourvilles had been an important family in the annals of the ancient republic. Magistrates and ambassadors in great number had been counted amongst its members. Many of its sons had laid down their lives for the freedom of their city—many of its daughters had mingled their tears with the blood oozing from glorious wounds. In the Swiss regiments of foreign armies they had also won renown. There had scarcely been a field of battle for the last three hundred years which had not witnessed the death of a Tourville.

Madame de Tourville came forward to meet Jean and Berthe with that gliding, sinuous walk which indicates the highly feminine woman.

The feet close to the ground, a slight movement of the hips, a scarcely perceptible swing of the body below the waist. "Good evening, Berthe. You must be pleased to have Jean back again," she said.

"It is the duty, I suppose, of a good wife to rejoice at her husband's return," Berthe replied.

Madame de Tourville hastened to change the conversation. "Was your trip successful, Jean?"

"Very," he replied. "You must come and see the skins and feathers I brought back to Berthe. They are magnificent, are they not?" he continued, addressing his wife.

"I suppose they are," she replied shortly.

Over by the fireplace, in which two or three logs were burning brightly, Tourville was talking to Madame Versovitch. She had been forced by the revolution to flee from her estates in Russia. "Just think," she was saying, "what awful people those peasants are. When the troubles broke out we sent for ours to learn their sentiments, and to assure ourselves of their fidelity. 'There has never been any difficulty between us, has there?' asked my husband. 'We have always been good masters and helped you when you were in need?' 'Yes,' replied their

spokesman, 'we have nothing to reproach you with.' 'Then you do not intend burning and destroying as has been done on so many properties?' 'What do you take us for? For monsters of ingratitude? No indeed. But,' confided the spokesman, 'we have arranged with Count Barnoff's peasants to destroy his chateau, and his peasants are coming here to destroy yours.' And they carried out their arrangement," she added.

"Madame is served," announced the butler. The dark oak wainscotted walls of the dining room were lighted by the wax candles that Tourville loved, and the lights on the table were curtained by rose colored shades. The centre-piece consisted of an immense cut glass bowl, filled with pink roses, resting on a chased tray of old silver. From this radiated lines of delicately tinted sweet peas, also pink, placed directly on the white cloth. The women's faces were beautified by the yellow diffused light of the wax candles reflected from the pink of the flowers. Behind a screen of palms the Bernadino's orchestra was softly playing selections from the modern operas.

"So here you are once more, back again," said Madame de Tourville to Jean, who was seated

at her right, "I can hardly believe that it was over a year ago that you left us."

"Yes, time flies, there is no mistake about that. I do not mind increasing age so much, for I feel that with every year I learn better to play the game of life. However, there is so much to be enjoyed that I am afraid my time will be up before I have seen and experienced everything."

"Your voyages are over for the time at any rate, are they not?" she asked.

"I am afraid that my stay here will be of short duration," he replied.

"You do not intend leaving us so soon again?" she said, softly.

It was long since everything had ceased between them. He had learnt the secret of retaining the friendship of his former mistress and the love of these two had been converted into a tender mutual interest. "You owe it to your friends to stay with them a while, now that you are back," she finished.

"I am afraid, Juliette, that would be beyond my powers. After dinner I will explain. It concerns you as well as me." She paled slightly. "Is it about Paulette?" she whispered. He nodded.

Hidden from their view by the massed up roses

of the centre-piece, Berthe was talking to Arthur. "What a strange man Boula is" she was saying. "I wonder what he is and where he came from. Where did you meet him?"

"He seems to have made an impression on you, but you must not take his goings on too seriously."

"Is he a fraud then, do you think? You ought to have told me so before, if you thought it."

"By no means. The only idea I meant to convey was that you should not let his sayings or his actions prey on you. All religious leaders exaggerate."

"I think I heard you mention the name of Boula. You mean, I suppose, Boula Omayat?" said Madame Versovitch, from across the table.

"Yes," answered Berthe, "that is whom I mean. Why do you ask?"

"I rather suspect that he is a countryman of mine. That is all I can tell you. He certainly is a mysterious character."

"An old impostor, I should think," broke in Maurice, who happened to be seated at Berthe's other hand.

"What makes you say that?" she asked. "Do you know anything against him?"

"Nothing, except one thing, and that I am

not at liberty to repeat," said he, looking at Arthur.

"You should not venture statements that you are not prepared to substantiate, either because you cannot or do not wish to." With this cutting remark she turned towards Arthur. Maurice smiled.

Opposite to them, at Madame Versovitch's left, sat Jules Servignac, commonly known as the "death cheater." The origin of this appellation was curious. Possessed of a small fortune, Servignac was taken seriously ill at the age of twenty-three. The doctors whom he consulted informed him that his was an incurable disease and that he had but two years to live. He determined that if his life was to be short it would at any rate be a merry one. At the end of the two years he found that the profession had been mistaken, that all traces of his illness had disappeared, and that—he was penniless. It was probably the best thing that could have happened, for, forced to earn his living, he turned his attention towards a literary career in which he gained a fair measure of success. "Have you heard," asked this gentleman in a solemn voice, "that all is over between Murier and Madame Naudler?"

"You do not mean to tell me that?" said Berthe. "Why that affair has been going on for years."

"I heard the same rumor," said Maurice, "and from what they tell me Murier has acted disgracefully. He had practically supported her and her child ever since her husband died and now without warning he deserts her. By the way," he continued, addressing Arthur, "he is one of your friends."

"He is one of my most intimate ones. I consider that he has acted quite properly, and can only blame him for not having given her up long ago. I am glad to see that he has at last remembered his duty toward his wife and family."

"How few men do this," sighed Berthe.

"You are quite right, Madame," said the 'death cheater,' solemnly.

"But you forget," insisted Maurice, "that he had other duties as well. He should at least have made some provision for her."

"And thus have robbed his family after having neglected them for years," said Arthur.

"Bornier," said Maurice, indignantly, "are you not aware that there are some obligations as sacred as those the law imposes upon us? I or any other honorable man would pay my gamb-

ling debts before I would my tailor's bill. And why? Simply because my opponent at play has no redress against me in law, whereas my tailor has. Apply the same reasoning to your mistress. She has confided in your honor and your debt to her is a sacred one; in some respects more so even than the one due your wife." A lull had occurred in the conversation, and Maurice's homily had been listened to by all.

"I quite agree with Maurice," said Jean to Madame de Tourville. "You may be sure that I always pay my gambling debts before my tailor's bill. However, I generally manage to pay both."

"Thank you, Jean. Let us hope that you will always be equally fortunate," said Juliette under cover of the general conversation, which had been resumed.

"What strange ideas Paquis has," protested Berthe to Arthur.

Maurice turned toward Madame Moron, his other neighbor. Madeleine Moron was a gay widow, who admitted that she was thirty, whose friends suggested forty, and whose enemies insinuated forty-five. Neutrals took the average and fixed on thirty-eight. Fat and fair she was, with peroxide blonde hair, an exuberant bosom

and dazzling white teeth, both of which latter charms she took every occasion of exhibiting. Her complexion was of a deep rose, her lips reddened by cosmetics. Her gown, excessively décolleté was cut *à la princesse,* and her corset was as tightly laced as the combined efforts of herself and maid could contrive. With the horrible cunning of her tribe she had noticed Maurice's dislike for Bornier, and had seized upon it as an angler seizes on a worm. "Why do people invite that man," she said in a low voice. "He is thoroughly déclassé. He was scarcely invited anywhere until Berthe took him up."

"I suppose then that it is on her account that he is invited," answered Maurice smiling. "What a lovely dress you have on this evening. It is so becoming."

She flushed with pleasure and became even pinker than before. She sighed, and the seams of her gown creaked and the bones of her corset groaned. "I am glad you like it, and it must be pretty if you say it: you have such good taste. Are you going to the restaurant des Quais after dinner?"

"Yes, Madame Rondin asked me. I suppose that it will be a debauche as usual."

"Yes, Madame, they are flocking here in great numbers," Tourville was saying to Madame Versovitch. "They are becoming a public danger. I do not wonder that your government is scandalized at the hospitality shown them."

"These Nihilists are not all as bad as you think," broke in Arthur. "There are some extremely distinguished men among them, whom I am pleased to call my friends."

"That of course is a matter of taste," the lady said, in her soft slav accent. "Have you ever met a man named Milovitch? If you have I would warn you against him.'

"Milovitch? I never heard the name before," replied Arthur.

"They say he is hiding in Geneva. He is a renegade priest, a man of the highest intelligence. He was one of the ringleaders of the revolution in my province, and shortly before our house was burned he looted the local bank and disappeared with a large sum. If he is caught he will be extradited."

"If I have met him I should not know it, for he would scarcely have told me his real name."

"No, do not talk to me of woman's rights," Jean was saying to Madame de Tourville. "God gave us women for our pleasure, but we, through

our stupidity and weakness, are rapidly turning them into our greatest curse."

"Surely not your *greatest* curse," she said.

"Maybe I exaggerate, perhaps there is some good in them, but we do not know how to bring it out. You know I love them dearly, perhaps too dearly," he admitted. They were silent for a moment, thinking of the past. Then, as dinner was finished, Juliette caught her husband's eye and gave the signal to rise.

They entered the salon. "What was it you had to say to me?" Juliette asked hurriedly of Jean, who stood before her, his coffee cup in his hand.

"Wait until your husband has gone into the smoking room, and then I will tell you." Then, in a louder voice, but still so low as not to be heard by the others, he said "Berthe is going to divorce me."

"Has it come to that?" she asked. "Do you know why?"

"Everything has its occasion as well as its cause. The occasion is what she terms my notorious infidelity, the cause is—well, I have my suspicions."

"He that goes hunting must expect to lose his place. Look over there." He followed the

direction of her glance, until his eye rested on Berthe and Arthur, seated on a sofa in a distant corner, conversing in low tones.

"So you think as I do."

"I would not stand for it," she said. "Why do you not do something?" He picked up a miniature of Paulette lying on the table near where he stood and studied it. He laid it down when his host, who had silently approached, placed a hand on his shoulder. "Come along, Jean," he said gaily, "and stop your flirting with my wife. We are going into the library to smoke a cigar."

"I will follow you in a moment. Your wife and I were having a discussion, and I wish to finish my argument." When Tourville and the other men had left the room Juliette led the way to the small salon. "Quick, tell me what has happened," she said. He leant towards her. "Juliette," he answered, "I am powerless. Otherwise I would soon put an end to Bornier. Berthe has threatened to cite you by name as co-respondent if I do the first thing to defend myself. And," he continued, "you know I always pay my gambling debts."

"She would do that! And having this in her heart, she comes to my house!"

"Calm yourself, Juliette, you may rely on me. I must join the men or they will begin to wonder." He bowed and left her.

When he was gone, Juliette re-entered the salon and joined Berthe, who had not moved from the sofa. "Good evening, Berthe," she said pleasantly. "I have been having such an interesting conversation with Jean about his voyage. He is most attractive."

"I have always been told that you thought so, and it is indeed pleasant to hear it from your own lips. One always likes to hear nice things about those one is fond of."

"You are quite right," answered Juliette, pretending not to understand the allusion. "By the way, how well Bornier looks this evening."

"Whose portrait was Jean looking at when your husband joined you?" asked Berthe, walking over to the table. "Ah! It is Paulette's, I see. She is about seven months younger than Marthe is she not? How much they resemble each other. They might be sisters."

"You and I are distant cousins, I believe, and I suppose that it is a reversion to some common ancestor. Such things happen, you know," answered Juliette, who was becoming flustered.

"The eyes and nose are very much like Jean's Are you also a cousin of his?" asked Berthe, sarcastically. Luckily at this moment Madame Versovitch joined them. "You are looking at the picture of your Paulette? What a lovely child she is. I do not wonder that you are proud of her. But, Madame," she addressed herself to Berthe, "they tell me that you see a great deal of Boula Omayat. I think it my duty to warn you. I did not wish to say so at table, but I have reasons for suspecting that he is no other than Milovitch."

"Thank you, Madame," replied Berthe curtly, "I am much obliged to you for your kind interest."

"Accept or refuse my warning as you please. You cannot say that I have not done my duty."

When the men returned after smoking, Arthur excused himself on the plea of an important engagement. "Are you not coming to the supper?" asked Berthe.

"I regret to say that I cannot. Something unexpected has turned up. You will forgive me?"

"What can I do?" and she shrugged her shoulders.

Shortly after Arthur's departure Madame de Tourville suggested that it was time for them to

be going to the café des Quais, where Madame Rondin was expecting them. For the convenience of her guests she had provided a station omnibus, which was waiting at the door to conduct them to their destination.

Through the windows of the private dining room, that had been engaged for the occasion at the restaurant des Quais, Madame Rondin was admiring the brilliantly illumined terrace of the casino, which blazed on the opposite side of the lake. On the arrival of her friends she flicked the ashes from her cigarette, placed it between her lips, and came forward both hands extended. "Jean, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, staying away so long. Ought he not, Berthe?" Then to Madame Moron, "Good evening Madame, how well you are looking. And here is Tourville with his fair wife. Madame Versovitch, I am glad to see you. Waiter," she called, "serve the cocktails." Gradually others arrived, for the guests at Madame de Tourville's dinner were not the only ones invited.

The room was severely plain. A sofa for the use of couples when dining tête-à-tête, the tables, the chair and the piano made up the list of movables. If the tarnished gold miror hanging over the mantel, and spotted in a hundred places

with the marks of champagne corks discharged at it by hilarious convives, could have retained the pictures which had been reflected in its dingy surface there would have been "a hot time in the old town to-night." The place was full of memories for many of those present, and such looked around reflectively with half smiles on their lips. The springs of the old sofa had creaked beneath the weight of Tourville and his *première danseuse.* That faded brown and gold wall paper had witnessed the first rendevous that Juliette de Tourville had granted Jean. The old waiter must have laughed to himself at the thought of the curiously assorted couples he had been called upon to serve.

"Sit down," cried the hostess, "we will not wait any longer. By the way, Berthe, where is Arthur?" She stopped and bit her lip. "Jean here is to your happy return," and she held up her glass, which the waiter had just filled with champagne. The effect of the wine was soon noted by the increasing exhilaration of the company. Voices were raised and cheeks became flushed. Garnier, who had been among the first to arrive, was confiding to Madame de Tourville, who appeared rather bored, how badly his divorce had made him feel, and how much

he had loved his wife. Marrin, with his long, white beard, was tenderly conversing with the hostess. Although he had long ceased to be dangerous, he for a moment flattered himself, such was the effect of the generous wine, that he was as phenomenal a specimen as his royal double. Bored by his love-making, "Let us sing something," said Madame Rondin. She leaped on to a chair and thence on to the table, from which point of vantage she began, in her sweet soprano voice, that delicious melody entitled, 'Viens Poupoule,' accentuating the more interesting passages by smashing the glasses. The chorus was taken up by everyone, and the fun became fast and furious. The hours sped by rapidly, and it was nearly four o'clock when they were startled by the sound of an explosion.

"What is that?" cried Berthe, who, annoyed at Arthur's absence, was seated in a rather listless attitude on the sofa.

"Maybe it was a premature blast in the quarries of the Salève," suggested Marrin. "I hope that no one is injured." With the others he rushed to the window, but naturally could see nothing.

"We shall find out to-morrow," cried Madame Rondin. "What difference does it make, any-

way? Come on," and placing herself at the piano, she began a lively polka.

"I repeat again, Juliette," said Jean, "you may rely implicitly on me. I shall do all in my power to protect you. I shall consent to Berthe's proposal, but only on the condition that no names shall be mentioned in the suit."

"Jean, you are a gentleman, and I regret nothing. I see now how well you pay your gambling debts."

"Hush," he said. "Here comes your husband."

XII.

It was shortly after seven when Nicholas appeared, and the cheap restaurant in which he had arranged to meet Masoushka was crowded with short-haired women and moujiks, attired in the national blouse and belt. The atmosphere was so smoke-laden that it was with the greatest difficulty, and only after searching several minutes, that he was able to discover his companion. She was awaiting him, seated at a table on whose food-stained cloth she was impatiently drumming with her fingers. "You have been drinking again. You ought to be ashamed to get yourself into this condition, when you have such important work before you," said the girl. With an oath he fell into the chair opposite her, and gazed fixedly at nothing.

The loud talking of the other guests eliminated the possibility of their conversation being overheard. "Well, if I have, what is that to you? Curse you, women, you are always interfering with affairs that do not concern you.

"As you say," she replied quietly, "it does not concern me. Luckily we are not married."

"That is true," he said, "we are not married. But what of it, whoever said we were?"

"No one ever said so, but naturally your acts cannot concern me as they would were we united by a legal bond, which fortunately does not exist."

He seized her by the hand, crushing it in his iron grasp. "So you would leave me, would you?" he said fiercely, under his breath, as Masoushka uttered a sharp cry of pain. "But even if we are not married you will not find that so easy."

"The easiest thing in the world," she replied, straightening with her other hand the fingers his brutality had injured. "All I have to do is to pack my trunk and go. There are no formalities to be observed, and you cannot have me brought back to the conjugal roof as the bourgeois do, for the good reason that with us this roof does not exist."

"You need not think that it will be as simple as that. I am the stronger and my will shall rule." As he spoke these words, he struck the table a blow with his closed fist. "And you need not delude yourself into thinking that I will

allow you to desert me for Arthur Bornier." The girl winced.

"If I wished to and he cared to take me I certainly would not allow your desires in the matter to interfere with me in the least," she replied calmly. "What could you do?" and she shrugged her shoulders.

"I could kill you both," he said, between his teeth.

"And this is your boasted liberty!" and her words were steeped in bitterness, "the liberty for which I gave up home and friends and maidenly modesty, and for which my poor brother is now suffering in Siberia! The intimidation by the strong of the weak, the oppression of the feeble by brute force. Ah, those are right who say that even the most galling tyranny is better than anarchy. You claim that women should be free and not the slaves of men. But better be the slave of a tyrant than the chattel of a monster. Do as you will, force will always rule, the force of the many against the few or the might of the knife and club."

With unsteady hand he raised his glass to his lips. "You are a traitor, I shall denounce you," he said as he replaced it on the table.

"You know that you are lying," she replied in

an emotionless voice.

"You say that to me," he cried furiously. "You had better be careful how you arouse the wolf."

"I shall do as I please in spite of your threats. The threats of a drunken man are meaningless," she said, tauntingly. "Waiter, bring us our supper," she continued.

When they had finished eating he looked at his watch. "It is past eight o'clock and time for me to be starting. I may be drunk, but I mean what I say. Go home and wait for me."

Without a word she arose and left the room. Her heart was full of bitterness and disappointment as she climbed the long flights. "My life is like these stairs," she thought. "I work and struggle, and finally, after effort and sacrifice, when I arrive, I find what—emptiness!" She threw open the door and entered the dreary apartment.

Two hours passed, and then her loneliness and bitterness were forgotten, for he had come, whom she was awaiting. "Beloved," her arms about Arthur's neck, she whispered, for though they were alone, so sacred to her was this great passion which had enfolded her that she wished to keep it secret even from the ears of listening

Eros. "Beloved, you have brought with you joy and hope. I was lonely and sick with suffering, but now all is changed. I love you." Her head fell against his breast as she felt his kiss in her neck and the soft caress of his hand. His strong arms alone prevented her from falling, and it was almost fainting that he carried her to the sofa.

When Arthur first entered on his pursuit of Masoushka, she had appeared to him as nothing more than a desirable and attractive woman. His higher feelings had played no part. But now, lying on the couch in that haunt of criminals, she looked so girlish and so sweet, that his heart was stirred by the first pure emotions it had known for many years. He softly kissed her on her closed eyes. At the touch of his lips she raised her lids, and in her glance he read his fate. So much love, so much humility and deprecating adoration, so much sacrifice and ardent passion were there revealed, that his soul was stirred to its profoundest depths. His past life of barren selfishness appeared to him in all its horror.

His desire to cleanse himself of the moral filth with which he was bespattered, his deep-seated longing to wash and to be clean, told him that

he loved, that he loved manfully and that never again could things be as they had been. A new element had entered into his moral make-up. The world, he was aware, would consider her as being unworthy even of his love. A woman, a mere girl, resourceless and driven from her home for an act which her childish fervor not only excused, but to which it even lent a certain moral grandeur, she had given herself to a man to whom she had not been legally united. Her ignorance and youth, her unwavering faith to her companion, until he had by his brutality driven her to despair, were no excuse. She was nothing more than an abandoned woman, and as such had no right to the claims or hopes which lie in every woman's heart, of some day being an honored wife and mother.

The irony of it all was brought home to him. He saw that what we call evil is nothing else than the energy wasted by the caged lion as he paces restlessly to and fro. His prison is of steel, ours is composed of the restraints that civilization imposes, is the result of conflicting passions and interests. Her act in a world untroubled by economic rivalries would have entailed no degradation, would have troubled, no delicate and hardly arrived at balance of

warring selfishnesses.

"Masoushka," he said, as he raised her in his arms. "I love you. We must never again be separated. I love you. My life is yours. With you to help me I may yet be someone."

"Be good to me," she said with a look of implicit trust in her face. "I am yours, do with me as you will, only never leave me. I love you; how I love you!"

Then down the stairs they went slowly, hand in hand, to the carriage which was waiting to drive them to his home.

Although Nicholas had been drinking heavily, he was by no means incapable of caring for himself, and his step was steady as he mounted the trolley-car by which part of his journey was to be accomplished. At the first hamlet which lies the other side of the frontier in France, he descended, and having learned by a hasty glance at his watch that it was a few minutes after nine, he buried himself in the darkness of a narrow lane. After a short walk the sound of waves lapping the rocks warned him that he was close to the lake. "What a cold night it is!" he grumbled. Taking a long pull at his flask, he buttoned his thick coat and raised his collar about his ears. The north wind or "bise" was

whistling through the trees, and the spray was dashing high on the shore.

"It will be a long and hard row, damn it! Damn everything, beginning with Masoushka," he said, as he untied the painter by which a small rowboat was attached, and stepped into the unsteady bark. He bent to his work and was soon rowing straight in the teeth of the fierce wind. His progress was slow, it being no easy task to make headway against the heavy sea. He struggled on, soaked to the skin, in spite of his thick coat, by the icy waves, that seemed as if they would overwhelm him. Frequently he was forced to stop, and devote his attention to the clearing of his frail craft of the water which threatened to submerge it. The darkness was intense, broken only by the faint lights that shimmered in the windows of some farmhouse or villa, and, well acquainted as he was with the shore, he was unable to determine with any exactness his position on the raging waters. At last, when almost in despair, his attention was attracted by the waving of a lantern. "It must be here," he said. He changed his course and rowed towards it. But now he was broadside to the waves and the perils of the situation were vastly increased. Indeed, several

times he thought that he was lost before he managed to find security in the quiet waters of the sheltered port. "Here, quick! take the painter," he said to the man who stood silently on the shore, the lantern still in his hand. "I am nearly dead with cold and wet. Has Wassily arrived?" The other nodded.

"Stay where you are," he said, as Nicholas was about to leap on shore. "He has already left."

"Damn it!" cried Nicholas furiously, "what do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," was the unperturbed reply. "He arrived this morning, but was unexpectedly called away. He will not return until to-morrow evening. Your orders are to be here again to-morrow at this same time."

"You might have let me know and saved me this disagreeable trip. What does Wassily care —what do you care if I am drowned a dozen times?"

"You are quite right; we do not care. What is a man's life when the interests of the cause are at stake?"

"But you might have let me know," repeated Nicholas.

"There was no sure messenger at hand and the risk of telephoning was too great. Enough;

you must be going. The coast guard may pass at any moment."

With a muttered curse Nicholas put about. A few strokes of the oar took him clear of the breakwater and he was once more exposed to the fury of the waves. For a moment the other watched him struggling with the elements, then, turning on his heel, walked in the direction of the villa, whose outlines could be seen dimly through the trees.

Having the wind astern, the return voyage was less perilous and progress was more rapid. Soaking wet and exhausted, Nicholas found himself once more before the door of his apartment. "Masoushka," he called as he entered. But there was no answer. "Curse you!" he shouted. "What are you doing? I am almost dead. Bring me a drink and some dry clothes. Damn you, hurry up!" Still silence reigned. "To hell with the sulky wench, she needs a good beating. I will cure her of her sulks," he cried, as flinging open the door of the bedroom, he struck a light. "She is not here! Where can she be?" he cried, as his eyes fell on the empty bed. "Masoushka, Masoushka, where in hell are you?"

Receiving no response to his calls, and by this time shivering with the cold he entered the labora-

tory to warm himself by the stove. Finding the fire nearly burnt out, he raked it and heaped on more coal. Stripping off his wet clothes he threw himself on the couch, and covering himself with a blanket commenced to collect his scattered thoughts.

From the bottle standing on the table at his hand he poured a glass of vodka. The fiery draught cleared his mind and he realized what had happened. "I know," he cried, suddenly, "she has betrayed me. Damn her! She has taken advantage of my absence and has gone to spend the night with Arthur. She need not think that she will go free," he screamed, as he leapt to his feet, the white froth on his mouth flecked with blood from the lips he had bitten in his impotent fury. "I will send them both to hell, if I have to go there myself to do it." He paced back and forth undressed and in his bare feet. At intervals he stopped to drain a glass of spirits. All night he walked in an ever increasing frenzy developed by rage and drink.

Lulled into security by the belief that Nicholas was still with Wassily, Arthur and Masoushka returned about four o'clock and boldly entered the laboratory. "Traitress," screamed Nicholas, as he met her horrified stare. Every mus-

cle in his naked body standing out like whip-cord, he struck at her with his closed fist. But it was Arthur, who throwing himself between them, received the blow, and grappled with the mad man. Arthur had the advantage of being sober, but his adversary, in addition to his vastly greater strength, was possessed of the force that delirium bestows. "Stop, stop, for God's sake," cried Masoushka, as the struggling men toppled to the floor, Arthur underneath. She held her breath as the drink-crazed fiend, grinding his knees into her lover's chest, seized him by the neck, and with his great hairy fingers wrung his throat. Like a tigress she leaped upon his bare back and beat upon his head, but as well might she have beaten on a rock. Arthur's face grew black and his swollen tongue protruded from his parched and bloody lips. She uttered a wild scream, and sank her teeth in the shoulder of the drink-crazed demon. He howled with pain, but not for one instant did he relax his hold. Seeing her efforts vain she glanced in desperation around the room. The red-hot stove attracted her attention. As quick as thought she grasped the shovel, and filling it with burning coals hurled it on Nicholas' naked body. With a scream of rage and agony he released his victim

and turned on her.

"Masoushka, I will send you to the devil and go with you," he cried. He lurched to the table, seized the bomb lying there and launched it at Masoushka. A frightful explosion resulted, wrecking the room, blowing out the walls of the house, and burying all beneath the ruins.

It was this that had disturbed the gay party at the restaurant des Quais.

EPILOGUE.

ARTHUR'S tragic death, and the accompanying circumstances which had revealed his intrigue with Masoushka, had come as a profound shock to Berthe. The thought that she had been exploited by an unscrupulous libertine was a severe wound to her self love. The first result had been to increase her anger against her husband, with whom she would not even speak. Hidden in her room she had nursed her rancor and her rage. Her discomfiture was increased by the news that Boula Omayat or Milovitch had been denounced to the police and extradited to Russia. His conspiracy with Arthur to rob her, and the means by which he had attained his end, had become public property, to the great amusement of the town. She had been wounded in her tenderest point—her vanity—and her spiteful fury knew no bounds.

Considering under the circumstances that his departure would best serve his interests, which opinion had been shared in by both Maurice and

the Abbé, Jean commenced his preparations for a prolonged absence. A few days later, the first violence of her emotions having subsided, Jean requested Berthe's presence in the library.

"Berthe," he said, "I am leaving to-night. As you insisted on my doing, I have explained the case to Maître Rapagon. I have also given him the name of the lawyer who is authorized to protect my interests. No opposition will be made to the granting of the divorce. On the contrary, my counsel has been directed to aid in every possible way. There is but one condition: that no names be mentioned. With this exception, everything shall be as you wish. The financial arrangements within the measure of my means shall be those which you esteem just and right. In this matter there are no restrictions."

"Thank you," she said, in an indifferent voice. She accompanied him that evening to the train, and waited with him in his compartment until the guard warned her that it was time for her to leave. Jean's last words were, "When you wish to start proceedings, notify Maître Rapagon. He will attend to everything, but I caution you make a price with him in advance, for, as is well known, his charges are exorbitant. The Abbé Moulin is to keep me advised as to

the children's health. If you need anything from me, he has my address." When the train was out of sight she turned and slowly walked towards the underground passage that led to the street.

The days of their separation became weeks and the weeks lengthened into months and still her actions gave no indication of her feelings. From day to day she put off her visit to Maître Rapagon. "There is no hurry," she kept saying to herself, "I must do nothing without mature consideration. Not that I am weakening," she hastened to reassure herself. "No, my feelings have not changed." She denied herself to all visitors, except to her most intimate friends, and in the seclusion of her home devoted herself to the education of her children, finding in their tender love a solace for her wounded feelings. Never before had she fully appreciated the joy and comfort to be gotten from their innocent companionship.

Relieved from the incubus of an occult superstition, and freed from the trammels of a foolish infatuation, she once more turned her thoughts to the religion of her youth, to the delight of the Abbé Moulin. Finally the crisis came, and after consultation with the good Abbé, she decided to

write to Jean.

"Dear Jean," she wrote. "Can you ever forgive me? Do not say that you have nothing to forgive, for you have much. In looking back over our lives, I can see in how many ways I failed to live up to what a good wife should be. I thought too much of amusing myself and not enough of my home and children. I insisted too much on your duties toward me and did not take into sufficient consideration the rights which were also yours. No, it is always a wife's fault if she fails to keep her husband—at least as much her fault as his. I now see how truly you spoke when you said that our ties were too sacred to be easily broken and that our companionship was based on mutual sympathy and above all on the existence of our children.

"I should have remembered how young we were when we married, and also that, though slightly my elder in point of years, that in maturity, as a woman I was older than you. No one is perfect, and now, when I think of Madame de Muriel's experience, and how through it all she remained unshaken in her allegiance, I feel ashamed. You must not from these words imagine for an instant that your honor has not been safe in my hands. I do not mean this, but I

feel ashamed to think that I could have allowed myself to be so influenced. One thing I noted was, that never during our discussion did you attempt to work on my feelings by mentioning our dead Jeannette. You did speak about our sorrows, passed through hand in hand, but that was all. I did not then appreciate your magnanimity. The other day I went to the place where she sleeps and the beautiful words of the poet Tennyson came to me:

'As through the land at eve we went,
And plucked the ripened ears,
We fell out, my wife and I,—
Oh, we fell out, I know not why,
And kissed again with tears.

For when we came where lies the child
We lost in other years,
There above the little grave,
Oh, there above the little grave,
We kissed again with tears.'

"And then, Jean, all bitterness left me, and I forgave. I thought of how you asked me to relent and to seal our reconciliation by together wiping away Aimé's tears. Now it was my turn

to weep, and as many tears fell on Jeanette's grave I felt that somehow they were an expiation for those that I had refused to join with you in drying. Come back, Jean. What I have to forgive is forgiven, and in return forgive me.

Your loving wife,

BERTHE."

A full year had passed since Arthur's tragic death, and Berthe was seated in the library. Near her played her children. As carriages passed by she leaned forward in her chair expectantly, but as the sound of their wheels faded in the distance she fell back. At length she spoke. "I thought it was your father," she said to Marthe, catching her breath.

"But mother, look at the clock. It will be fifteen minutes before father can possibly arrive," replied the child.

"That is so, dear, but I thought the train might have gotten in ahead of time."

"I shall be glad to see father again," lisped Aimé in his baby voice. "He was so sad when he went away. Had he been naughty and was mother cross?"

"If mother was angry at father she has forgiven him," she replied.

"That is right, we must always forgive, Mon-

sieur le Curé says."

"Listen," said the mother, "do you hear that?" as again the rumbling of wheels came to their ears. "It is your father." She started to her feet, her hands pressed to her heart, every nerve intent. This time there could be no doubt. The carriage stopped before the door. An instant later the bell rang violently, but not more violently than the throb of Berthe's pulse. Jean entered. She threw herself into his arms. Her sight was veiled, she could see nothing, she could only feel his arms around her and his kisses on her lips. In that moment she thanked God that she had been saved from the crime of destroying her family and Jean realized that in all the chances and changes of this mortal life the nearest approach to true happiness is to be found in the sacred ties of home.

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